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I Know I Can Learn: The Experiences of NCAA Division I – FBS Student-Athletes with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD in Higher Education

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sarah Elizabeth Stokowski entitled "I Know I Can Learn: The Experiences of NCAA Division I – FBS Student-Athletes with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD in Higher Education." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Kinesiology and Sport Studies.

Robin Hardin, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

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I Know I Can Learn: The Experiences of NCAA Division I – FBS Student-Athletes with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD in Higher Education

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Sarah Elizabeth Stokowski

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DEDICATION

To those individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD who feel stupid, dumb, and incapable, you can learn.

To the NCAA institutions that cared enough about their student-athletes to allow me to speak with them, and to the student-athletes I spoke with for being brave enough to sit down with me and share your stories, thank you.

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ABSTRACT

With the evolvement of the NCAA's initial and continuing eligibility practices throughout the past two decades, interest in studying the experience of student-athletes has increased (Gayles, 2009). Student-athletes have long been stereotyped as "dumb jocks" (Harrison et al., 2009; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988). Campus groups such as faculty members and students suspect that student-athletes lack intelligence (King & Springwood, 2001; Sailes, 1998), and put forth far less motivation in the classroom than they do on the playing field (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001).

Student-athletes, especially those with learning disabilities can potentially face harsh scrutiny due to being labeled as not only a student-athlete, but as a person with a learning disability (Clark & Parette, 2002). When an individual is aware of the negative stereotype surrounding his or her social group, depending on the situation that the individual is in, there is a possibility of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Despite the countless studies that have utilized stereotype threat, studies that use the theory pertaining to student-athletes, as well as literature involving those with learning disabilities are scarce (Aguino, 2011).

Although research has focused on educational experiences in regards to the general student-athlete population, little is known about the experiences of student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. Nine football student-athletes at an NCAA Division-I FBS institution were interviewed. Three major themes appeared throughout the data: the impact of football, learning competence, and stereotypes. The results of this study will allow those working with this particular population of student-athletes to develop a greater understand of their experience, and can ultimately assist in eliminating stereotype threat, which will lead to an increase in the academic performance of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, & Garcia, 2012; Clark & Parette, 2002).

Keywords: ADHD, experience, football, learning disabilities, stereotype threat, student-athletes

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

Albert Einstein

History of Athletics in Higher Education

The relationship between sport and higher education is relatively new. In fact, higher education in the United States had been in existence for more than 200 years before the initiation of the first intercollegiate athletic event, a rowing competition between Harvard and Yale in 1852 (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988). Built upon Puritan ideals; initially, higher education was derived in religious principles, which allowed for studies of the classics and God (Gerdy, 1997; Rader, 2009; Smith, 1988). Sport participation was viewed negatively and seen as unproductive (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988). As the 19th century approached, institutions were open to activities that would benefit American society (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988). Students began to take pleasure in sport participation and serving as spectators at athletic events (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988). The new founded popularity of intercollegiate sports led university administrators to incorporate sport into the mission as well as the culture of the institution (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988). Influenced by Oxford and Cambridge, and founded under the notion of amateurism and fair play, athletic participation provided male students an outlet for their aggression, promoted a sense of community, class pride, and created a bond between students, faculty, and alumni (Rader, 2009; Smith, 1988).

College became a social experience shared by students, and by the mid-1800s students began organizing athletic teams and competing against other institutions (Rader,

2009; Smith, 1998). Scholars argue that college athletics was professionalized from the beginning, the first collegiate athletic event in 1852 when Harvard and Yale competed in rowing (Gerdy, 2006; Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011; Yost, 2010). The event took place on Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire in an effort to increase awareness and promote ridership on the new Boston-Concord-Montreal Railroad (Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). Both teams were provided with free transportation, unlimited alcohol, and gifts (Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). Harvard was victorious, receiving gold oars and trophies from Tiffany and Company (Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). By 1876, students founded the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletics of America (Smith, 1988). That same year, students from Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton formed the Intercollegiate Football Association (Smith, 1988). Control of college sport gradually began fall in to the possession of faulty members and university administrators. Faculty members began to form athletic conferences to assist in unifying rules for athletic play across institutions, and by 1895, University of Pennsylvania's Franklin Field, the first college football stadium opened (Smith, 1988).

During a 25 year span, from 1880 to 1905 there were 330 football related deaths and more than 1,149 student-athletes had been injured participating in the game (Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). Due to increased violence surrounding the game of football, including 18 deaths in 1905 alone, as well as a broken nose suffered by his own son, President Teddy Roosevelt called to the White House university leaders from Harvard, Princeton, and Yale (Rader, 2009; Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). Roosevelt demanded football be reformed. As a result of the initial meeting at the White House, New York University president, Henry MacCracken, hosted a meeting in which 62 institutions founded the Intercollegiate Athletic

Association of the United States, which would later become the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010).

With a national governing body reforming and unifying the rules, college football flourished (Crowley, 2006; Yost, 2010). In 1914, the Yale Bowl was built to hold a capacity of 70,000 spectators (Smith, 1988). The stadium boom had begun, and from 1920 to 1940, 40 stadiums were built and filled with those willing purchase tickets to support their team (Crowley, 2006; Smith 1988; Yost, 2010). By 1926, college football attendance had increased 25% from the year prior, reaching 15 million, with $30 million in gate receipts (Smith, 1988).

University administrators soon realized that a winning football program could provide their institution notoriety as well as large financial contributions (Gerdy, 1997; Smith, 1988, Rader, 2009; Yost, 2010). Several studies have concluded that a winning intercollegiate athletics program, particularly in successful traditional revenue producing sports can spark an increase in educational contributions, academic reputations, and increased applications (Anderson, 2012; Humphreys & Mondello, 2007; Pope & Pope, 2009). Anderson (2012) reported that a winning Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) program can increase athletics donations by 28%, and increase applications by 3%. The increased emphasis placed on winning led universities to hire professional sport coaches (Smith, 1988). To ensure coaches achieved victory, many universities had separate admission criteria for athletes (Covell & Barr, 2001; Gurney, Tan, & Winters, 2010). Often times, incoming student-athletes receive special treatment and were held to a lower admission standard (Covell & Barr, 2001; Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gurney et al., 2010; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

Initial Eligibility Standards

The abuse that stemmed from universities accepting academically underprepared students vastly influenced NCAA recruiting efforts and eligibility standards (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Ultimately, the continuous corrupt practice of institutions admitting student-athletes on the basis of athletic talent instead of academic merit led the NCAA, the largest governing body of intercollegiate sport, to introduce initial eligibility standards in 1962 (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). In essence, the NCAA set forth criteria to determine if a prospective student-athlete could be classified a qualifier (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). A qualifier is a prospective student-athlete who has been deemed eligible to for financial aid, practice and competition upon entering higher education (NCAA, 2012a).

Although 30% of Rutgers freshman football student-athletes were failing algebra during the first intercollegiate football game between Rutgers and Princeton in 1869, initially, freshman eligibility requirements seemed to be of little importance (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). After all, most freshmen did not compete on varsity teams. However, in the 1870s, Harvard's freshman-sporting events became popular among students and fans (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). It was important that Harvard's freshman teams gained victory over their Ivy League rivals (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Ensuring that the freshman teams beat their opponents, Harvard allowed upper classmen and even graduate students to compete on the freshman teams (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Conflict soon sparked between Harvard and Yale in regards to eligibility standards (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Ironically, even before the founding of the NCAA, administrators at institutions participating in college sport found themselves attempting to solve issues involving eligibility requirements (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Based on the report citing the significant amount of failing

grades that Harvard freshman football student-athletes were receiving, the Harvard Athletic Committee ruled that freshman athletes were ineligible for competition until they had reached one year of residency; thus, banning freshman from varsity athletics (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). This legislation caused Harvard's Ivy League opponents as well as members of the Big 10 Conference to pass similar regulations (Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). Ultimately, the decision to make freshman student-athletes ineligible for intercollegiate sport competition would have a long lasting effect on college sport. It would take nearly 100 years before freshman could be placed on a varsity roster. The NCAA gave freshman the right to participate in varsity competition again in 1972 (Oriard, 2009).

Upon the creation of the NCAA in 1906, it was thought that compensating athletics would conflict with athletics' ability to enhance the educational mission (Oriard, 2009). Furthermore, faculty believed that providing athletic scholarships based on athletic ability would deter student-athletes from their purpose of being on a college campus, an education (Oriard, 2009). Although, there was never a formal NCAA rule regarding athletic scholarship, teams in the prominent Southeastern Conference (SEC) began awarding athletic scholarships in 1935 (Smith, 2011). Institutions found that athletics was not on an even playing field, after all, some institutions (like those in the SEC) were awarding athletic scholarships, whereas other institutions (primarily in the North) did not provide student-athletes with athletic scholarships (Smith, 2011). At the 1939 NCAA Convention, the governing body voted to allow NCAA member institutions to provide their student-athletes with need-based financial aid (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). Although the governing body now had a consistent rule regarding athletic scholarships, institutions, not the NCAA oversaw its compliance (Smith, 2011).

In the early 1950s, the NCAA was faced with multiple scandals and much of the controversy involved academic cheating (Smith, 2011). The United States Military Academy was a powerhouse football program throughout the 1940s and had only four losses from 1944 to 1950; nevertheless, the program found itself immersed in scandal (Smith, 2011). Coach Red Blaik excused his football student-athletes from guard duty, chapel service, and created a tutor program that ensured his players remained eligible (Smith, 2011). West Point football players were also given copy of math, physics, and English exams (Smith, 2011). As a result of the scandal, nearly the whole football team was dismissed form the institution for unethical conduct (Smith, 2011). The College of William and Mary, the second oldest institution of higher learning, had lowered admission standards for athletes in order to compete athletically (Smith, 2011). The institution altered football and basketball student-athletes' high school transcripts, changed college course grades, and gave student-athletes credit for classes that they did not complete (Smith, 2011). Such instances of academic misconduct lead the NCAA to develop eligibility standards in hope of ending such corruption.

1.60 rule. In order to prevent future scandals, the first initial eligibility legislation to be passed was the 1.6 Rule, established in 1962 (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). The act was modeled after the initial eligibility standard in the Atlantic Costal Conference (ACC) (Smith, 2011). The ACC was the first conference to have minimum academic standards for student-athletes (Smith, 2011). Essentially, the 1.60 Rule consisted of calculations based on a prospective student-athlete's standardized test score and grade point average (Crowley, 2006; Oriard, 2009; Smith, 2011). The calculation then predicted if a prospective student-athlete had the potential to earn a college grade point average of at least a 1.60. The

legislation also required prospective student-athletes to have a minimum overall high school grade point average of a 2.00 if order to be eligible to participate in intercollegiate athletic competition. The 1.60 rule did little to ensure prospective student-athletes were prepared for higher education (Oriard, 2009; Gurney et al., 2010). The rule was also greatly abused by college sport coaches (Oriard, 2009). After all, remedial (lower level) courses as well as non-core content classes such as woodworking, physical education, and home economics counted towards the prospective student-athletes' minimum high school grade point average of a 2.00 (Oriard, 2009; Gurney et al., 2010; Smith, 2011). Upon entering higher education, due to the lack of academic preparedness, many student-athletes found that they had a low possibility of earning a degree (Klein & Bell, 1995).

2.00 rule. In 1973, the NCAA revoked the four-year athletic scholarship and instituted the one-year scholarship (Oriard, 2009; Smith, 1988; Smith, 2011). This same year the NCAA identified its member institutions as being in one of three divisions (i.e. Division I, II, or III) (Croley, 2006). Some argue that NCAA began to break into divisions in 1957. With the addition of basketball and cross-country championships, decision makers in the NCAA believed that it was not fair to have institutions with large athletic budgets compete against institutions with small athletic budgets (Crowley, 2006). Even to this day, the three divisions that encompass the NCAA still comprise the basic framework for the organization (Crowley, 2006).

In 1972, a year prior to the approval of the one-year scholarship and the NCAA member institutions splitting into divisions, the NCAA approved freshman athletic eligibility. This legislation once again allowed freshman to compete on varsity teams (Oriard, 2009). With the increase of freshman participation within college sport, the initial

eligibility requirements faced reform once more. The 1.60 Rule was replaced by the 2.00 rule, which required prospective student-athletes to have a 2.00 minimum high school grade point average to be eligible for participating in intercollegiate sport (Klein & Bell, 1995). Similar to the standards of the 1.60 rule, the 2.00 rule also accepted remedial as well as non-core content course work (Klein & Bell, 1995). Thus, like the 1.60 rule, the 2.00 rule did not prevent coaches from recruiting academically underprepared student-athletes. Essentially, the 2.00 rule allowed coaches to recruit almost any player regardless of academic merit (Klein & Bell, 1995).

In 1972, college football became fully racially integrated. The opportunity to participate in collegiate athletics gave some African American students the chance at earning a college degree (Klein & Bell, 1995). Scholars such as Oriard (2009) believe that low initial eligibility standards led to the exploitation of African American student-athletes. It was also during this time that college administrators realized the large amount of revenue that could be made through television coverage of football games as well as the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (Smith, 2011). Universities found themselves admitting student-athletes who had elementary reading levels, and thus, found it difficult to complete college assignments (Oriard, 2009). It was apparent "that schools were recruiting student-athletes who could contribute to their teams' success even if these students had a very little chance of graduating" (Klein & Bell, 1995, p. 19). To assist in the athletic eligibility of some African American student-athletes, they were given passing grades in their college classrooms that were not earned (Oriard, 2009). African American student-athletes at institutions such as Utah and Arizona State were enrolled in summer school programs off-campus where neither course work nor classroom attendance was

required (Oriard, 2009). Oklahoma State defensive end, Dexter Manley, came to campus with a second grade reading level and scored extremely low on the college entrance exam (Smith, 2011). At Georgia, no attempt was made to even educate the student-athletes coming in academically underprepared, many whom were primary African Americans (Smith, 2011). Many African Americans student-athletes, similar to those at Georgia, found themselves taking easy classes to maintain athletic eligibility (Klein & Bell, 1995; Oriard, 2009; Smith, 2011); sadly, many of these classes were not applicable towards obtaining a college degree (Huff & Shapiro, 1977).

A prominent example of the unintended consequences of the 2.00 rule is the case of Kevin Ross. In 1978, Kevin Ross, a six-foot-nine inch African American center left his hometown of Kansas City, Kansas, to play basketball at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Upon entering higher education, Ross could barely read (*Kevin Ross v. Creighton University*, 1992). He scored a nine on the ACT, placing him in the bottom fifth percent of seniors who took the exam (*Kevin Ross v. Creighton University*, 1992). During his time at Creighton, Ross' exams as well as papers were completed for him (*Kevin Ross v. Creighton University*, 1992). Upon finishing his eligibility, Ross was 32 hours short of graduating (*Kevin Ross v. Creighton University*, 1992). Ross sued Creighton University for neglect and failure to provide him with an adequate education. The judge in the case required Creighton University to pay Ross retributions for failing to uphold their academic obligation to him (*Kevin Ross v. Creighton University*, 1992).

Proposition 48. Due to instances, such as that involving Kevin Ross, the NCAA approved Proposition 48 in 1986. The new academic-eligibility legislation raised initial eligibility standards (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). Proposition 48 required prospective

student-athletes to have a 2.00 grade point average in 11 core courses consisting of math, English, science, and history (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). Furthermore, the legislation required a minimum standardized test score of a combined 700 on the SAT or a composite 15 on the ACT (Crowley, 2006; Smith, 2011). African American student-athletes were affected by the higher NCAA initial eligibility standards. Historically, African Americans have "been disadvantaged by standardized testing" (Klein & Bell, 1995, p. 20). Klein and Bell (1995) assert that the motivation behind the NCAA passing such standards was racism due to the hostility caused by the athletic dominance of African American student-athletes. In fact, "more than 75% of African American student-athletes had college admission test scores that were below the 25th percentile in the distribution of Caucasian scores (Klein & Bell, 1995, p. 19). If Proposition 48 had gone into effect just two years prior, more than half of the African American student-athletes (60%) and 40% of the African American football signing class would have been declared ineligible (Klein & Bell, 1995). Within a year of initiating Proposition 48 the number of African Americans on athletic scholarship decreased by 4% (Klein & Bell, 1995).

Proposition 16. A decade after Proposition 48 was passed; the NCAA once again changed the initial eligibility requirements for potential student-athletes. Proposition 16 (1995) required potential student-athletes to have a 2.00 high school grade point average, 13 core courses, and a combined score of a 1010 on the SAT and an 86 on the ACT (Crowley, 2006; Yost, 2010). Proposition 16 did provide an exception to assist potential student-athlete who may have a lower standardized test score. Students with a grade point average of a 2.5 of higher could qualify with a combined 820 on the SAT or a 68 on the ACT (Yost, 2010). Those who opposed the legislation argue that it was unfair to compare

students, when in fact potential student-athletes come from such diverse backgrounds (Yost, 2010). Others argue that minority students were placed at a disadvantage by being required to take a "mainstream oriented" standardized test (Yost, 2010, p. 43). Once again, the NCAA was accused of discriminating against potential African American student-athletes (Oriard, 2009; Yost, 2010).

In 1999, a group of potential African American student-athletes from Philadelphia filed a class action lawsuit against the NCAA. The students challenged that the minimum standardized test scores that the NCAA required for athletic participation on the basis that the standardized tests are racially biased (*Cureton v. NCAA*, 1999). Essentially, because these potential student-athletes did not earn the minimum test score needed to receive qualifying status, the NCAA initial eligibility legislation cost these potential student-athletes the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sport, and possibly even the chance to earn a college degree (*Cureton v. NCAA*, 1999). Although the court ruled in favor of the NCAA, this case was crucial in sparking yet another academic reform movement.

The 2003 academic reform legislation. The passing of Proposition 48 and 16 did not shed positive light on the NCAA. Many felt that both policies were racially charged (Greene, 1984; Klein & Bell, 1995; Yost, 2010). After years of discussion and backlash, the NCAA enacted a policy, the 2003 academic reform legislation. The act increased the number of core courses needed to become a qualifier from 11 to 14 (Gurney et al., 2010; Smith, 2011). Due to the ridicule the NCAA faced by requiring potential student-athletes to achieve a minimum standardized test score, the organization decided to do away with a required standardized test score (Gurney et al., 2010; Smith, 2011). The initial eligibility index (also known as the sliding scale) replaced the minimum requirements for both high

school grade point average and standardized test scores (Smith, 2011). Basically, the sliding scale allows potential student-athletes to qualify with a lower grade point average to qualify with a higher standardized test score and vice versa (NCAA, 2012a). Theoretically, with a high enough grade point average, an NCAA prospective student-athlete can be deemed an NCAA qualifier without answering a single question correctly on a standardized exam (Gurney et al., 2010).

Due to the flexibility of the sliding scale, cases of academic fraud are increasing (Gurney et al., 2010). Many students, particularly minority students, are at a disadvantage when it comes to standardized testing (The College Board, 2010). There are uncontrollable factors that can influence a student's ability to perform well on standardized exams (The College Board, 2010). For example, students who attend to private secondary institutions tend to score higher on standardized exams than those who attend public school (The College Board, 2010). Ethnicity, family income, and the education level of the student's parents are also factors that can influence a student's test score (The College Board, 2010). According to the latest Census (2010) data, African Americans have the lowest median household income of any ethnicity in the United States, and 20% of African Americans have a college degree, when compared to Caucasian individuals (39%). Based on this information, it can be inferred that African Americans are less likely to do well do standardized exams due to uncontrollable factors such as education level and income (Census, 2010; The College Board, 2010).

With the initiation of the sliding scale, if a potential student-athlete has a high grade point average, they can earn qualifying status with a low standardized test score or vise versa. Theoretically, "prospective student-athletes who fail to answer even a single

question correctly on a standardized exam can establish eligibility by attaining an appropriate core unit GPA" (Gurney et al., 2010, p. 479). The need for some potential student-athletes to earn a high GPA is leading to grade inflation (Gurney et al., 2010). There have been instances of high school teachers altering grades to ensure outstanding interscholastic athletes are eligible to compete, and ultimately have the necessary academic credentials to participate at the next level (Beem, 2006). A *New York Times* investigation revealed that former Kentucky basketball star Eric Bledsoe, who did not have the grades to meet NCAA initial eligibility standards, transferred high schools and increased his grade point average from a 1.9 his junior year to a 2.5 his senior year (Thamel & Evans, 2010). Through what is speculated to be grade tampering, Bledsoe met the minimum standards to be eligible for NCAA competition (Thamel & Evans, 2010). Essentially, because students with low test scores need high grade point average in order to become an NCAA qualifier, teachers are being paid or coerced into giving potential student-athletes grades that they did not earn (Gurney, 2009; Yost, 2010). In 2009, an investigation in to the basketball program at the University of Memphis alleged that the university had knowledge regarding a former member on the men's basketball team (reportedly Derrick Rose) paying a student to take the ACT for him so he could meet NCAA initial eligibility standards (Walker, 2009).

The 2003 Academic Reform legislation contributed the emergence of preparatory schools. A New York Times (2006) investigation revealed that as many as 200 potential student-athletes enrolled at various prep schools within the last decade to earn a high school diploma while essentially doing little work outside of their sport (Thamel, 2006). These institutions attract talented players who may need a little extra "help" academically in order to meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards (Thamel, 2006). Some of these prep

schools, such as God's Academy in Irving, Texas, had 12 students enrolled. Ironically, the only students in the school are also on the basketball team (Thamel, 2006). Furthermore, the school's only teacher was its head basketball coach. These prep schools are acting as diploma mills, ensuring that potential student-athletes earn the grades needed in order to qualify for NCAA competition (Thamel, 2006). Although the NCAA attempts to monitor high schools, it is impossible for the organization to examine every high school in the United States and even some abroad thoroughly (Thamel, 2006). Due to the consequences of the 2003 Academic Reform legislation grade inflation is occurring, and some potential student-athletes are utilizing prep schools in order to gain eligibility (Gurney, 2009; Thamel, 2006).

Continuing Eligibility

In 1984 student-athletes graduated at a rate of 53% (Grant, Leadley, & Zygmont, 2008). To increase NCAA student-athlete graduation rates and improve academic performance, the NCAA has put in place legislation that monitors the academic progress of student-athletes once on campus; these academic endeavors are referred to as continuing eligibility (Crowley, 2006). In 2003, the NCAA came up with a method referred to as the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) (Crowley, 2006). NCAA officials believe that the GSR is a better way to measure student-athletes graduation rate than the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) (Crowley, 2006). The GSR accounts for transfers as well as mid- year enrollees, whereas the FGR simply takes in to account when the student arrives and if he or she graduates from an institution with six years (NCAA.com, 2011). Eighty percent of NCAA student-athletes graduate within six years (NCAA.com, 2011). The FGR for NCAA student-athletes has increased five points sense 2004 (NCAA.com, 2011).

To ensure student-athletes are taking degree applicable courses that will ultimately lead to graduation within five years, as of 2003 the NCAA requires that student-athletes follow progress towards degree (PTD) requirements (NCAA, 2012a). Ideally, student-athletes complete their prerequisite courses (or 40% of their degree) in their first two years of college, declare a major, and then must complete 60% of their degree by the end of their junior year, 80% of their degree by the end of their senior year, and will graduate by the end of their fifth year (NCAA, 2012a). First-year student-athletes must pass a minimum of 16 hours (16 hour rule) during their first two semesters, and 30 hours their first year (30 hour rule) with a 1.9 grade point average to be eligible for competition (NCAA, 2012a). To ensure that student-athletes are taking a sufficient amount of hours, the NCAA requires student-athletes to take a minimum course load of 12 hours a semester (NCAA, 2012a).

The Academic Progress Rate (APR) developed by the NCAA in 2004 measures the eligibility and retention of NCAA scholarship student-athletes (Crowley, 2012). Each athletic team has an APR score for the rolling span of four years. Each scholarship student-athlete can potentially earn four points per year, two points in the fall semester and two points in the spring semester (NCAA, 2010). Of the two points awarded each semester, there is a point for eligibility (meaning that student-athlete is in good academic standing) and a point for retention (meaning that the student-athlete remained at his or her institution) (NCAA, 2010). If the student-athlete is both eligible and retained for both semesters, the team is awarded 4/4 total points. To calculate the APR of a certain athletic team, take the total points divided by the possible points and multiple by 1000 (NCAA, 2010). As of 2012, the penalty threshold increased from a 925 to a 930. Thus, any team who is below the threshold will be penalized (NCAA, 2012b). There are four levels of

penalties: each year the team remains under the APR threshold of a 930, the team will increase a penalty level, thus, the penalties become more severe. If a team has an APR under 930 for two years, that team will lose up to 10% of its athletic scholarships each year the team is under 930, and being under the penalty threshold for three years will cause the team to be banned from post season competition (NCAA, 2012b). Due to repeatedly failing to meet the APR threshold, for the 2012-13 season, 15 teams that are ineligible for postseason competition (NCAA, 2012b). Men's basketball teams such as the University of Connecticut, University of Toledo, Towson University, along with the football programs at Texas Southern University and Hampton University are among the programs ineligible for post season competition due to low APR (NCAA, 2012b).

In order to avoid penalties, athletic academic advisors are under pressure to ensure their student-athletes are eligible. With the pressure placed on athletic coaches to win, athletic academic advisors must figure out a way to protect the eligibility of their student-athletes (Fountain & Fennley, 2009, 2011). An investigation into allegations of academic fraud at the University of North Carolina uncovered that many academically at-risk student athletes were placed in African American studies courses to assist them in maintaining athletic eligibility (Kane & Curliss, 2012). These courses did not require classroom attendance, and the only assignment was a 20-page paper (many of which were believed to have been written by the student-athletes' tutors) due at the end of the semester (Kane & Curliss, 2012). To ensure student-athletes meet PTD requirements and ultimately are awarded the maximum amount of ARP points, some student-athletes are being pushed into "jock majors" by their academic advisors (Fountain & Fenley, 2009, 2011; Suggs, 2003). Other studies have also shed light on the fact that student-athletes might not necessarily be

choosing a major based on their career aspirations, and thus, student-athletes may not be freely choosing their majors (Otto, 2010). Fountain and Finley's (2009) examination of academic majors for football players in the ACC revealed that minority players were more likely to be clustered into majors, with five institutions reporting more than 50% of minority football student-athletes being enrolled in the same major. When the researchers examined all six FBS conferences, they discovered that 14% of FBS conference football programs had more than 50% of minority upper-classmen student-athletes enrolled in the same major (Fountain & Finley, 2010). Recently, Fountain and Finley (2011) confirmed their research yet again by showing that minority football players are clustered into a limited number of majors.

Initial eligibility and student-athletes with learning disabilities

A national survey of undergraduate students revealed that 9% of college students reported having a learning disability (NPSAS, 2010). Many students with learning disabilities are academically underprepared for the rigors of higher education (Banco, 2011), and depending on their disability will find advanced college courses in reading, writing, and mathematics difficult (Hughes & Smith, 1990). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA-2004) explains that learning disabilities make it difficult for the brain to receive, process, and effectively communicate information. This particular condition impedes learning for many; ultimately, affecting their schooling and their adult lives (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are the second largest disability subgroup on campus (next to specific learning disabilities) to be served through the Office of Disability Services (Harbour, 2004). Of the undergraduate student body, 11% reported having ADHD (Horn &

Nevill, 2006), and it is estimated that 4% to 12% of children have ADHD (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001, Lerner & Johns, 2012), making ADHD one of the most common conditions among children. Those who have learning disabilities often are diagnosed with ADHD as well (Goldstein, 2007; Silver, 2006). Studies have estimated that of those who have ADHD, 25% to 50% also have learning disabilities (Goldstein, 2007; Silver, 2006).

According to both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation act of 1973, it is illegal for institutions of higher education to discriminate against individuals with such conditions as learning disabilities or ADHD (Denbo, 2003). As such, federal law mandates colleges and universities provide equal opportunities for students with disabilities such as learning disabilities and ADHD. Under both the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, institutions must provide individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD appropriate accommodations to assist them throughout their academic endeavors (Denbo, 2003).

Despite federal laws that protect the rights of individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD, organizations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have been found to be noncompliant with such legislation (*United States of America v. NCAA*, 1998). Prior to 1998, the NCAA, through the organizations initial eligibility practices, denied the opportunity of sport participation to student-athletes with learning disabilities and ADHD (Thomas, 2002). Ultimately, prominent cases brought forth against the NCAA by student-athletes, Chad Ganden, Toure Butler, and Michael Bowers, all who had learning disabilities, led the NCAA to reevaluate its practices and procedures regarding student-athletes with learning disabilities and ADHD (Thomas, 2002).

In the mid-1990s, Chad Ganden was a standout swimmer and an Illinois state high school champion (*Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Ganden had accepted a swimming scholarship to a Big 10 institution; however, he was denied qualifying status by the NCAA (*Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Although Ganden met NCAA initial eligibility requirements in regards to grade point average (GPA) as well as standardized test score, he failed to meet NCAA established core course requirements (*Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Ganden had a learning disability and took remedial classes throughout high school. The NCAA did not allow remedial course work to count towards the core course requirements, and, as such, Ganden was deemed a non-qualifier (*Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Ganden filed a complaint with the U.S. Justice Department.

Toure Butler was diagnosed with a learning disability in seventh grade (*Butler v. NCAA*, 1997). He received special education services in eighth grade and into high school (*Butler v. NCAA*, 1997). Butler accepted a scholarship to play football at the University of Washington. During his first semester, Butler's scholarship was revoked because the NCAA did not deem him to be a qualifier (*Butler v. NCAA*, 1997). Butler failed to meet with NCAA's GPA requirement as well as the core course requirement (*Butler v. NCAA*, 1997). Like Ganden, Butler took special education classes that did not meet the NCAA's core course curriculum. Butler sued the NCAA on the basis on discrimination under the ADA (*Butler v. NCAA*, 1997).

A year after Ganden and Butler sought relief from the NCAA and its policies, in 1997, Michael Bowers, a student-athlete with a learning disability filed suit against the NCAA after the organization ruled him ineligible for athletic competition during his first two semesters of college (*Bowers v. NCAA*, 1997). In all instances, the plaintiffs argued that the

NCAA was in violation of Section III of the ADA (*Bowers v. NCAA,* 1997; *Butler v. NCAA*, 1997; *Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Section III of the ADA extends to private entities (No. 101-336, § 3, 104 Stat. 328, 1991). Not all private entities are required to comply with ADA; however, because the NCAA operates in education, under ADA Section III, it is considered a public accommodation (No. 101-336, § 3, 104 Stat. 328, 1991). Any organization that is a public accommodation is required to comply with ADA legislation (No. 101-336, § 3, 104 Stat. 328, 1991).

Due to these cases, the U.S. Department of Justice began a 30-month investigation into the initial and continuing eligibility practices of the NCAA in regards to student-athletes with learning disabilities (*Bowers v. NCAA,* 1997; *Butler v. NCAA*, 1997; *Ganden v. NCAA*, 1996). Upon investigation of the NCAA policies regarding student-athletes with learning disabilities, it was determined that the NCAA had failed to permit access to prospective student-athletes with learning disabilities (*United State of America v. NCAA*, 1998). In fact, it was reported that the NCAA granted eligibility certification to almost 80% of athletes without disabilities; yet, the organization only granted eligibility certification to less than 30% of student-athletes with learning disabilities (Wieberg, 2007). The U.S. Department of Justice determined that the NCAA's policies were too rigorous, and limited opportunities of higher education for those individuals with learning disabilities (NCAA-Department of Justice Consent Decree, 1998). Overall, the U.S. Justice Department concluded that the NCAA was in direct violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that the organization must modify its rules to ensure its compliance with ADA legislation (NCAA-Department of Justice Consent Decree, 1998).

In 1998, the U.S. Department of Justice came to an agreement with the NCAA. In order to comply with the request of the U.S. Department Justice and avoid future legal action, the NCAA has made changes to allow student-athletes with learning disabilities greater access into intercollegiate athletics (Miller, 1997). Initial eligibility standards became more flexible for prospective student-athletes with learning disabilities. The NCAA would now allow approved special education courses as well as remedial courses to fulfill core course requirements for prospective student-athletes with learning disabilities (NCAA Consent Decree, 1998). This legislation is expressed in Bylaw 14.3.1.2 (NCAA, 2012a). Bylaw 14.2.1.2.1.2 allows potential student-athletes with learning disabilities have extended time to complete their core course requirements (NCAA, 2012a). Meaning that student-athletes with learning disabilities can complete up to three core courses upon graduating from high school to meet either the NCAA core course requirement or the GPA requirement (NCAA, 2012a). Regarding continuing eligibility, according to Bylaw 14.3.1.2, student-athletes with learning disabilities are eligible to receive a waiver that allows them to take less than a full course load (NCAA, 2012a). Requirements such as PTD can also be waved for student-athletes with learning disabilities. Bylaw 14.1.7.3.4 allows student-athletes to be waved from PTD requirements if evidence shows that taking a fill course load is impeding on their disability (NCAA, 2012a).

Although the improvements made to the NCAA's initial eligibility practices regarding potential student-athletes with learning disabilities was intended to increase opportunities, there is evidence that some potential student-athletes may abusing this legislation in order to become an NCAA qualifier (White, 2008). A *USA Today* article (2009) revealed that within a year's span, between 2007 and 2008, the number of student-athletes

with learning disabilities who received NCAA initial eligibility accommodations increased by more than 70% ("College Teams Exploit," 2009). Furthermore, approximately 1,000 incoming NCAA student-athletes with learning disabilities are granted permission to participate in athletic competition despite the fact that they have failed to complete the high school core courses necessary to become an NCAA qualifier due to being diagnosed with a learning disability ("College Teams Exploit," 2009). Ironically, then interim NCAA president Jim Isch commented on the article explaining that the article was misleading ("Athletes with learning disabilities," 2010). Isch expressed that of the more than 100,000 students that certified by the NCAA to participate in college athletics, less than half of 1% received any type of accommodation due to the diagnosis of a learning disability ("Athletes with learning disabilities," 2010). Not only are diagnosed learning disabilities perhaps assisting potential student-athletes to gain access to the NCAA; but also once on campus, student-athletes who are diagnosed with learning disabilities can get access to accommodations that can assist them in meeting NCAA continuing eligibility requirements (Farrey, 2008).

In 2009, after an extensive investigation, the NCAA Committee on Infractions determined that Florida State University was in violation of NCAA regulations. Ultimately, Florida State was penalized for unethical conduct, academic fraud, and allowing their student-athletes to receive extra benefits (NCAA, 2009a). It was reported that 24% of Florida State student-athletes body had been diagnosed with a learning disability ("College teams exploit," 2009). An ESPN investigation revealed that more than one-third of the football team and three-quarters of the men's basketball team at Florida State University had been diagnosed with learning disabilities (Farrey, 2009). Student-athletes who have a

documented learning disability, according to NCAA rules and regulations, can receive waivers when it comes to fulfilling NCAA legislation (NCAA, 2012a). For example, student-athletes with learning disabilities are not held to progress towards degree (PTD) requirements, which ensures that NCAA student-athletes are taking the courses necessary to graduate within a five-year period (NCAA, 2012a). Student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities can also receive a waiver excusing them to take a full (12 hour) course load every semester (NCAA, 2012a).

In order to comply with the ADA, the NCAA has sought to improve its treatment of student-athletes with learning disabilities (Miller, 1997). Although initially, individuals such as Ganden, Butler, and Bowers used their experiences to create opportunities for current as well as future NCAA student-athletes facing similar circumstances (Miler, 1997), the policies that the NCAA has put in place to comply with federal legislation have left room for exploitation, as with the Florida State incident (Farrey, 2009). Although the NCAA does monitor potential student-athletes with learning disabilities in regards to the initial eligibility process (NCAA Consent Degree, 1998), once a student-athlete enters higher education, the NCAA does not oversee the diagnosis or accommodations provided to student-athletes with learning disabilities (Ferray, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

With the evolvement of the NCAA's initial and continuing eligibility practices throughout the past two decades, interest in studying the experience of student-athletes has increased (Gayles, 2009). NCAA student-athletes are under an immense amount of pressure not only to perform on the playing field, but with the toughening standards for NCAA eligibility, student-athletes must also do well in the classroom (Gayles, 2009). The

pressure to keep student-athletes eligible stems from the increasing popularity of intercollegiate athletics (Coakley, 2009; Gerdy, 2006). For 2010-11, reported revenue of the NCAA was $845.9 million; the majority (81%) of the revenue is from the organizations 14-year, $10.8 billion agreement with CBS to broadcast the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship (NCAA, 2012c). NCAA Division I member institutions receive 61% of NCAA revenue distributions, which for the 2010-11 year, was $478 million (NCAA., 2012c). Despite the fact that the majority of intercollegiate athletics programs fail to produce a profit (Fulks, 2010), the potential for large financial compensation has led NCAA Division I member institutions to strive for winning athletic teams (Eitzen, 2009). At times, the urge to win often takes precedence over the wellbeing of student-athletes (Gerdy, 2006).

Some scholars express concern that due to lax initial eligibility standards, often times student-athletes are being admitted into institutions of higher learning based on athletic talent, not necessarily academic merit (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). Gerney et al. (2010) reported that nearly half of the student-athletes at the institution where he and his colleagues conduct their research were specially admitted. Needless to say, many student-athletes are underprepared for higher education, and because some institutions make admission exceptions for student-athletes; adversely, some student-athletes earn lower grades in college classrooms (Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Yost, 2010). Although the NCAA (2011) emphasizes the fact that student-athletes are graduating at a rate equal to or above their non-athlete peers, the FGR for men's football is 56% and the FGR for men's basketball

is 65%. Male athletes, particularly those in traditional revenue producing sports are not graduating at the same rate as non-athletes (NCAA, 2011).

The lack of academic merit expressed by some student-athletes that have been given preferential treatment regarding athletic admission has led to the development of stereotypes (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Harrison, Lawrence, 2004; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). Student-athletes have long been stereotyped as "dumb jocks" (Harrison et al., 2009; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988). Campus groups such as faculty members and students suspect that student-athletes lack intelligence (King & Springwood, 2001; Sailes, 1998), and put forth far less motivation in the classroom than they do on the playing field (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001). When asked how they are perceived, student-athletes reported that they are seen as unintelligent, lazy, and coddled (Simons, Bosworth, Fujta, & Jensen, 2007). Furthermore, student-athletes find themselves associated with committing immoral acts such as cheating in order to win a game and committing acts of academic fraud (Knapp, Rasmussen, & Barnhart, 2001).

Not only are student-athletes faced with stereotypes, but also some individuals with learning disabilities find themselves perceived negatively because many individuals are not educated about learning disabilities (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010; Wiener et al., 1990). A Tremaine Foundation (2010) report revealed that 80% of the general population thinks that intellectual disabilities are associated with learning disabilities, and 75% associate learning disabilities with more major disabilities like autism. As such, students with learning disabilities are often rejected, teased, and ignored by their peers.

Student-athletes, especially those with learning disabilities can potentially face harsh scrutiny due to being labeled as not only an student-athlete, but as a person with a learning disability (Clark & Parette, 2002). When an individual is aware of the negative stereotype surrounding his or her social group, depending on the situation that the individual is in, there is a possibility of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype Threat Theory can be applied to a wide range of real life situations (Steele & Aronson, 1995), as well as to any group in which a negative stereotype exists (Aronson, 2004; Steele, 1997). Studies involving stereotype threat provide evidence of the societal pressures placed on students to conform to the stereotypes of their group hinders scholastic achievement (Aronson & Steele, 2005). Despite the countless studies that have utilized stereotype threat, studies that use the theory pertaining to student-athletes, as well as literature involving those with learning disabilities are scarce (Aguino, 2011). The stereotypes that are placed on student-athletes have been linked to a decrease in academic accomplishment, as well as a decrease in athletic performance (Simons et al., 2007). Through the implementation of academic legislation such as PTD, GSR, and ARP, the NCAA is striving to eliminate negative stereotypes surrounding student-athletes (Harrison et el., 2009).

At a young age some African American adolescents are exposed to social ideas of what they should be, i.e., athletes (Lewis, 2010). Popular culture has habituated these stigmas by placing a high value on the athletic capability of student-athletes, yet holding student-athletes to low standards in the classroom (Burke, 1993; Harrison et al., 2009; Nelson, 1983; Simons, Bosworth, Fujta, & Jensen, 2007; Watt & Moore, 2001). The pressure that is being placed on some African American males to excel on the playing field

demonstrates to these young men that athletics are a priority (Lewis, 2010). The ideal that athletics take president over academics leads many African American men to lack academic motivation (Burke, 1993; Harrison et al., 2009; Lewis, 2010; Nelson, 1983; Simons et al., 2007; Watt & Moore, 2001). Due to the expectation of athletic greatness, 65% of African American males ages 13 to 18 believe that they will make a living playing professional basketball (Simons et al., 2007). Some parents urge their children to participate in sport in hopes of a full-ride athletic scholarship hoping they will see playing time in an Division I athletic event and maybe even the professional ranks (Yost, 2010); however, less 1.2% of Division I football players will play in the National Football League (NFL) (NCAA, 2012d). In order to maintain eligibility, certain student-athletes appear to be clustered into far less rigorous academic majors (Fountain & Finley, 2009; Fountain & Finley, 2010; Fountain & Finley, 2011; Otto, 2010). Other student-athletes appear to be diagnosed with learning disabilities in order to meet NCAA eligibility requirements (White, 2008). Intercollegiate athletics generates revenue and visibility for an institution, promotes a sense of community, and can be educational for those participating (Gerdy, 1997). Striving to educate those participating is a major justification for athletics place within higher education. In order to effectively educate student-athlete to be the best on and off the playing field, the treat must be eliminated (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, & Garcia, 2012; Gredy, 1997). The stereotype threat must be reduced because it inhibits individuals and their environments from performing to their fullest ability (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, & Garcia, 2012). By minimizing the threat, student-athletes will likely become motivated and experience an increased enjoyment in the classroom (Aronson, 2004). First and foremost,

the key to intervention is understanding the problem (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, & Garcia, 2012).

In order to understand student-athletes with learning disabilities, and assist in eliminating the threat, studies of the experiences of this population are warranted (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, & Garcia, 2012; Clark & Parette, 2002). There is still much to learn about student-athletes in college (Gayles, 2009). Although research has focused on educational experiences in regards to the general student-athlete population, little is known about the academic experiences of student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities. Previous studies have examined how student-athletes view their collegiate experience; specifically, if student-athletes believe they are receiving a well-rounded educational experience (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2006). Other studies have strived to compare the experiences of student-athletes to their non-athlete peers (Bowen & Levine, 2003; Pascerella, Bohr, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah, 2006).

In order to assist student-athletes academic achievement, the student-athlete experience must be understood (Monda, 2011). There is still much to learn regarding the obstacles that student-athletes endure (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). The NCAA policies do not reflect the individual needs of student-athletes, specifically those who have learning disabilities (Hishinuma & Fremstaf, 1997). With the NCAA altering eligibility criteria for student-athletes with learning disabilities, the number of student-athletes with learning disabilities within the NCAA is increasing (Clark & Parette, 2002; Weiss, 2011). Student-athletes have unique needs, although academic support programs strive to meet the needs of student-athletes, appropriate action cannot be devised without proper understanding of the diverse student-athlete population (Preacco, 2009). Although a limited amount of

surveys have been conducted, because the NCAA does not monitor student-athletes with learning disabilities or the identification of learning disabilities once a student-athlete arrives on campus, there are no concise data or demographic information regarding student-athletes with learning disabilities competing within the NCAA (Hishinuma & Fremstad, 1997).

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) believe that "the failure to fully understand the distinct experiences of college student-athletes can have a significant impact on the extent to which we understand the need for specific forms of campus assistance and can affect questions of policy in higher education" (p. 235). We are only just beginning to understand the issues surrounding student-athletes with learning disabilities (Hishinuma & Fremstad, 1997). Research on student-athlete experiences can assist in the development of policies and practice (Gayles, 2009). With effective support, the needs of student-athletics with learning disabilities can be addressed (White, 2008). This study strives to fill gaps in the literature regarding the experience of student-athletes with learning disabilities, as well as add to the text surrounding Stereotype Threat Theory and student-athletes and those with learning disabilities. By gaining a greater understanding of student-athletes with learning disabilities, programs can be developed and awareness can be spread in hopes of reducing stereotype threat and increasing the overall experience of student-athletes with learning disabilities.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD.

Research questions. Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. How do football student-athletes with a learning disabilities and/or ADHD navigate the demands of higher education?
2. In what situations do football student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD experience instances of stereotype threat?

Definitions

18-hour rule - According to section b of Bylaw 14.4.3.1, student-athletes in their first year of eligibility are required to complete "eighteen-semester or 27-quarter hours of academic credit sense the beginning of the previous fall term or sense the beginning of the certifying institution's preceding regular two semesters or three quarters (hours earned during the summer may not be used to fulfill this requirement)" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 172).

24-hour rule - Section a of Bylaw 14.4.3.1 states that student-athletes in their first year of eligibility are required to complete "twenty-four-semester or 36-quarter hours of academic credit prior to the start of the student-athlete's second year of collegiate enrollment (third semester, fourth quarter)" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 172).

African American - In accordance with the NCAA (2010), African American is defined as "a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa" (p. 7).

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) - The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) provides equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities regarding employment, public accommodations, transportation, government services, and telecommunications.

Athletic academic advising - "Athletic Academic Advising helps student athletes maximize their academic potential by mastering the dual pressures of participating in a sport and earning a college education" (DePaul.edu, 2003).

Athletic academic advisor - "The staff provides time management training, tutoring, registration assistance and other academic support services" (DePaul.edu, 2003).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - ADHD is a chronic neurological impairment that consists of persistent inattention, restlessness, and impulsivity (American Psychiatric Association, 2004; Lerner & Johns, 2012).

Code - A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, silent, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a position of language-based of visual data" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3).

Committee on infractions - Bylaw 19.1 states that the Committee on Infractions is "responsible for administration of the NCAA enforcement program" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 324).

Continuing eligibility - NCAA academic legislation such as the 18-hour rule, 24-hour rule, and Progress Toward Degree (PTD) requirements that ensure student-athletes are in good academic standing at their particular NCAA member institution (NCAA, 2012a).

Core Course - In order for a class to meet the criteria to be considered a core course, Bylaw 14.3.1.2 explains that it must be taught by a qualified instructor, applicable towards high school graduation, taught at a high school level (not a remedial or special education class), and be in one of the following subject areas: English, mathematics (Algebra I or higher), natural or physical science, social science, foreign language, religion or philosophy (NCAA, 2012a).

Dyslexia – "Severe difficulty in learning to read, particularly as it relates to decoding and spelling" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, p. 69).

Eligibility Center - Bylaw 14.1.2.4 states that the eligibility center determines "the initial eligibility of a student-athlete" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 148).

Educational Impacting-Disability - The NCAA (2012a) uses the term educational-impacting disability, defined in Bylaw 14.02.4 as "a current impairment that has a substantial educational impact on a student's academic performance and requires accommodation" (p. 145) in place of the term learning disability. Based on the special education literature, for the purpose of this study, the term learning disability will be used.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) – "This division was formerly known as Division I-A. In accordance with NCAA Bylaws, the group includes those institutions that play at least 60 percent of their regular-season football games against other FBS institutions. All but four basketball games (both men's and women's programs) must be against other FBS teams. Seven men's and seven women's, or alternatively six men's and eight women's sports, must be sponsored. There are also requirements for attendance, scheduling and financial aid (Fulks, 2010, p. 106).

Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) – "This division was formerly known as Division I-AA. These institutions must play more than 50 percent of their regular-season football games against FBS or FCS institutions. All but four basketball games (both men's and women's programs) must be against other Division I teams. Seven men's and seven's women's, or alternatively six men's and eight women's sports, must be sponsored. There are also requirements for scheduling and financial aid (Fulks, 2010, p. 106)."

Full grant-in-aid - According to Bylaw 15.02.5 "a full grant-in-aid is financial aid that consists of tuition and fees, room and board, and required course-related books" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 201).

Good academic standing - Bylaw 14.01.2.1 states "to be eligible to represent an institution in intercollegiate athletics competition, a student-athlete shall be in good academic standing as determined by the academic authorities who determine the meaning of such phrases for all students of the institution, subject to controlling legislation of the conference(s) or similar association of which the institution is a member" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 145).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004) is the federal law that ensures special education services for children with disabilities ages three to 21.

Initial eligibility - Academic requirements a prospective student-athlete must meet in order to be deemed a qualifier (NCAA, 2012a). Prospective student-athletes must earn a minimum high school grade point average (GPA), a standardized test score as stated in Bylaw 14.3.1.1.2, and complete 16 approved high school core course (NCAA, 2012a).

Interscholastic athletes - Students who participate in high school sponsored athletic activities (Lumpkin & Stokowski, 2010).

Major clustering - Major clustering occurs when more than 25% of student-athletes on a particular team are enrolled in the same major (Case, Greer, & Brown, 1987).

National Association of Academic Advisers for Athletics (N4A) - With over 1000 members nationwide, "the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics is a diverse organization of service professionals who promote the integrity of their profession

by providing guiding principles and quality services to support one another as they share information, resources and expertise in their efforts to empower student-athletes to become more productive individuals through educational and personal development" (ncsu.edu, 2012)

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - The NCAA is the largest governing body of intercollegiate athletics in the United States, "the NCAA oversees 89 championships in 23 sports. There are more than 400,000 student-athletes competing in three divisions at over 1,000 colleges and universities within the NCAA." (NCAA, 2013).

Nonqualifer - Bylaw 14.02.11.2 states "a nonqualifier is a student who has not graduated from high school or who, at the time specified in the regulation (see Bylaw 14.3), has not successfully completed the required core-curriculum or has not presented the required minimum core-curriculum grade-point average and/or the corresponding SAT/ ACT score required for a qualifier" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 146).

Progress Toward Degree (PTD) - Bylaw 14.4.1 states that in order "to be eligible to represent an institution in intercollegiate athletics competition, a student-athlete shall maintain progress toward a baccalaureate or equivalent degree" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 172). Specifically, as stated in Bylaw14.4.3.2 "a student-athlete who is entering his or her third year of collegiate enrollment shall have completed successfully at least 40 percent of the course requirements in the student's specific degree program. A student-athlete who is entering his or her fourth year of collegiate enrollment shall have completed successfully at least 60 percent of the course requirements in the student's specific degree program. A student-athlete who is entering his or her fifth year of collegiate enrollment shall have

completed successfully at least 80 percent of the course requirements in the student's specific degree program" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 175).

Prospective student-athlete - According to Bylaw 13,02,12 "a prospective student-athlete is a student who has started classes for the ninth grade. In addition, a student who has not started classes for the ninth grade becomes a prospective student-athlete if the institution provides such an individual (or the individual's relatives or friends) any financial assistance or other benefits that the institution does not provide to prospective students generally" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 79).

Purposeful sampling - Patton (2002) defines purposeful sampling as "cases for study (e.g., people, organizations, communities, cultures, events, critical incidences) are selected because they are 'information rich' and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling, the, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population" (p. 40).

Qualifier – A student who is eligibility for financial aid, practice and competition (NCAA, 2012a).

Semi-structured interviews – A semi-structured interview is defined "as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3).

Snowball sampling - Snowball sampling is useful when the potential participants are difficult to locate (Nardi, 2006). It is a process that involves asking participants if they are aware of other individuals, like them, who might be interested in participating in the study (Patton, 2002).

Special admission - Bylaw 14.1.6.1.1 describes special admission as "a student-athlete may be admitted under a special exception to the institution's normal entrance requirements if the discretionary authority of the president or chancellor (or designated admissions officer or committee) to grant such exceptions is set forth in an official document published by the university (e.g., official catalog) that describes the institution's admissions requirements" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 149).

Specially admitted student-athlete - A student-athlete who is admitted to the university despite not meeting the minimum published admission criteria (Gerney, et al., 2010).

Specific learning disabilities (SLD) - For the purpose of this study, the IDEA-2004 definition of specific learning disabilities (SLD) will be used; however, throughout this dissertation, SLD will be referred to as leaning disabilities. According to Section 602 of the IDEA-2004 the term specific learning disability is defined as (p. 2657-2658):

> 1. in general—*Specific learning disability* means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.
>
> 2. Conditions included—such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
>
> 3. Disorders not included—Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Stereotype - Traits or characteristics of a social group and its members (Stangor, 2009).

Stereotype threat - According to Steele and Aronson (1995), "stereotype threat is being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (p. 797).

Student-Athlete – "For the purposes of this report, a participant at an NCAA member institution is defined as a student who, as of the day of the varsity team's first scheduled contest: (a) is listed as a team member; (b) practices with the varsity team and receives coaching from one or more varsity coaches; or (c) received athletically-related student aid. Any student who satisfies one or more of the above criteria is a participant, including a student on a team the institution designates or defines as junior varsity, freshman, or novice, or a student who does not play in a scheduled contest, whether for medical reasons or to preserve eligibility (i.e., a redshirt). Student-athletes who participate in more than one sport are counted in each sport. Male practice players on female teams are not included in this report" (Irick, 2011, p. 7).

Students At Risk – Students who may need additional support when dealing with basic competencies such as reading, writing, and mathematics (Slavin, Kerweit, Madden, 1989).

Waiver - According to Bylaw 14.02.15 a "waiver is an action exempting an individual or institution from the application of a specific regulation" (NCAA, 2012a, p. 147)

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This study strives to provide a glimpse into experiences of a sub-population of student-athletes, specifically, NCAA FBS Division I football players who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. Due to the fact that there is very limited research on this sub-population of student-athletes, the literature review covers a wide range of literature within the fields of special education and sport. Throughout this chapter, the reader will be exposed to relevant literature regarding students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, as well as current literature regarding the experiences of NCAA Division I student-athletes, and literature involving Stereotype Threat Theory and sport.

Specific Learning Disabilities

The recent definitions of learning disability has evolved when compared to how learning disabilities were perceived in the mid-twentieth century, as learning disabilities were originally thought to be the product of a brain injury that had occurred before, during, or after birth (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Strauss & Lehtinen, 1947). For decades, it was falsely concluded that a brain injury was hindering the ability of children to learn, when in reality a learning disability is not the result of a brain injury (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Strauss & Lehtinen, 1947). Samuel Kirk (1962) was the first individual in the United States to classify and define learning disabilities. Originally, the term *learning disabilities* was used to describe academic struggles that some children face in various subject areas despite possessing higher intellectual abilities (i.e. reading, writing, math) (Kirk, 1962). Sense then, there have been various other definitions used to describe academic deficiencies that some children face; there are many definitions and they vary from state to state. Learning

disabilities is defined by federal law in IDEA-2004 as "one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (p. 2657-2658). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) was the first federal special education regulation for students with disabilities in the United States. Most recently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA-2004) protects and serves school-aged children with disabilities. IDEA-2004 provides free and appropriate public education to those with disabilities. IDEA-2004 strives to measure the academic performance of students with disabilities, ensure that teachers have the credentials and enhanced training in order to effectively educate this population, encourage parental involvement, and to monitor the identification and achievement of minority students.

IDEA-2004 distinguishes disabilities into 13 categories. Of these groups, learning disabilities is the largest high-incidence category consisting of almost half (46.2%) of all disabilities, with more than 5.3% of the students in the United States identified as having a learning disability (Cortiella, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2011) more than 2.5 million students have been diagnosed with a learning disability and qualify for accommodations under IDEA-2004.

Despite the fact that educating a student who has a learning disability is 1.6 times more expensive than educating a student without a disability (State of Learning Disabilities, 2011), it is crucial that individuals with learning disabilities are screened and identified. Failing to diagnose those who have learning disabilities will cause those individuals to have a difficult time functioning later in life. Often times, these individuals

experience depression, anxiety, and high rates of unemployment (Wilson et al., 2007). Each state has its own rules and regulations regarding what learning disabilities are, as well what specific criteria can be used to diagnose learning disabilities (Lerner & Johns, 2012). For example, in accordance with IDEA-2004 guidelines, the state of Tennessee has two approved evaluation procedures that can be used to identify students for potential learning disabilities: the Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) Method and the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012). RTI was codified into laws in IDEA-2004; however, it is rooted in the emphasis of scientific based instruction.

The rationale behind RTI is to identify those students who may be struggling in their academic careers early, in hopes that an intervention may take place before the student falls behind (D. Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Ideally, the RTI method will benefit all students'; ultimately, improving the quality of education that each student is receiving in the general classroom. Students in need of additional support can be given adequate assistance without being removed from the general classroom (L. Fuchs, Fuchs, & Zumeta, 2008). Students no longer have to wait, essentially failing, before they are flagged as potentially having a learning disability (L. Fuchs et al., 2008). The RTI approach involves three tiers; each represents a level of high quality demonstrated instruction or intervention (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The first tier (primary intervention) is simply the general classroom, where all students receive adequate instruction. If the student is in the bottom 10% to 15% of their class, despite the evidence-based instruction, the child will move to the second tier. During the second tier the child experiences more intensive instruction, and may be placed in smaller classroom or group settings during certain times of the day or for subjects that may be challenging (D. Fuchs et al., 2003; L. Fuchs et al., 2008). If tier two is ineffective, the

child will be evaluated in order for educators to better understand the academic needs of the child (L. Fuchs et al., 2008). If warranted, the child may move to tier three and most likely be tested for a learning disability and receive special education services.

Although RTI has focused on improving the education received by all students there are criticisms. RTI can result in delayed identification of learning disabilities due to all of the interventions that a student must go though before he or she is diagnosed; intervention primarily focuses on reading and can overlook those students who have difficulty in other areas (Johns & Kauffman, 2009; Wanzek & Vaghn, 2009). Most importantly, by utilizing the RTI approach the original concept of a learning disability (as unexpected under achievement) is being lost (Cortiella, 2009). The prevalence of learning disabilities is decreasing. Between 2000 and 2007 those identified with learning disabilities fell by 9% (Cortiella, 2009).

Aside from RTI, the state of Tennessee permits schools to identify those students who may have learning disabilities using the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model. It is may be important to note that this method is also used to diagnose students with learning disabilities during the third tier of RTI. Comprehension evaluation data are used to make decisions regarding the wellbeing of the student (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Comprehension evaluation data includes observational data that describe the student, medical findings, as well as an analysis of the student's ability to think, read, and spell (i.e. qualitative analysis) ("Division of Learning Disabilities," 2007). The most common comprehensive evaluation is the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model, a method to identity students with learning disabilities as permitted by the IDEA-2004 and has been in practice sense 1975 (94-142). In the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model, the student's achievement (i.e. what he or she

has learned) is compared to the student's intellectual ability (i.e. what the individual has the capability of learning) (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Mostly likely, if a significant disparity occurs, the student is a good candidate for the diagnosis of learning disability.

The method of using the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model to identify individuals with learning disabilities is quite controversial (Fletcher et al., 2006; Lyon et al., 2001). This model utilizes IQ scores, which some argue may not be an appropriate indicator of ability for some students and there is limited evidence that the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model is valid (Stuebing et al., 2009; Fletcher et al., 2004). IQ scores can often times be influenced by cultural and environmental factors and is not considered to be the best indicator of the student's ability (Stuebing et al., 2009; Fletcher et al., 2004). Furthermore, IQ scores do not provide information regarding how to best serve the child's intellectual needs (Bell & Allen, 2000). Despite its criticisms, the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Model has served as the federal definition of learning disability diagnostic criteria for more than 40 years (L. Fuchs et al., 2008).

For most children, signs that students may have a learning disability begin in elementary school (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Nearly 40% of all children with learning disabilities are in elementary school and range from ages 6 to 11 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). However, the likelihood of being identified as have a learning disability is low before the age of nine. Students often struggle in the subject area of reading and can experience difficulties learning to read (Lerner & Johns, 2012). However, students may have a hard time regarding the subjects of mathematics and written expression as well (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Behavioral issues can contribute to the child's disruption in learning. Poor motor skills, reduced attendance, and difficulty focusing can lead to children

experiencing difficulties during primary education (Lerner & Johns, 2012). There is also public misconception about the diagnosis of learning disabilities; an online survey revealed that nearly a quarter (23%) of adults thought that the majority of learning disabilities were diagnosed in kindergarten, 53% of respondents indicated that the majority of children were diagnosed with learning disabilities between grades one and four (NCLD, 2012).

As children continue in primary education, the course material becomes significantly more difficult and requires increased levels of thinking (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Within grades 4 through 8, some students begin to experience problems in history and science (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Children are commonly identified with learning disabilities between ages 9-14 (Lerner & Johns, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). At this age, students with learning disabilities also begin to experience problems socially. Students often perceive their peers with learning disabilities negatively (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Often times, due to the disapproval students with learning disabilities face, they experience lower social status than their peers without disabilities (Conderman, 1995). Furthermore, students with diagnosed learning disabilities find it difficult to have relationships with their peers without disabilities because many students do not want to tarnish their reputations by associating themselves with this special population of students (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Most individuals do not fully understand what learning disabilities are. A Termaine Foundation (2010) study of attitudes about learning disabilities revealed that parents, teachers, and administrators associate learning disabilities with severe disabilities such as intellectual disabilities and autism. Inclusion of students with disabilities being incorporated in general education classrooms can assist in the improved social skills and an increased understanding of this

population (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Cirtiella, 2011). The IDEA-2004 requires students to be placed in the least restrictive environment that meets their educational needs. More than 60% of all students with learning disabilities spend the majority of their time at school (80%) in a general education classroom (IDEA Part B, 2010; Cortiella, 2011).

Upon entering secondary education, students with learning disabilities often have a difficult time. Many fall behind in school and the reality of repeatedly failing leaves many students frustrated (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Students with learning disabilities in secondary education find themselves significantly behind in the areas of mathematics and reading. On average, nearly half of all students with learning disabilities are three grade levels behind, and a quarter of students with learning disabilities are one grade level behind in the subjects of mathematics and reading (Wagner et al., 2003). Failure often leads the student with learning disabilities to participate in delinquent acts, 14% of imprisoned youth have learning disabilities (Cortiella, 2011; Quinn, Rutherford, & Leone, 2001). In fact, more than 30% of students with learning disabilities will face disciplinary actions at school, such as suspension or expulsion (Wagner et al., 2003). Although 60% of all learning disabilities are diagnosed in secondary education, the number of individuals identified with learning disabilities dramatically decreases after age 17 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). According to Lerner and Johns (2012) this could be attributed to the fact that a large amount of students with learning disabilities do not graduate from high school. Only 67% of students with learning disabilities graduate from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Of those who complete high school, 10% of individuals with learning disabilities continue their education at a 4-year college or university within two years of graduation

(Wagner et al., 2005). Unlike school-aged children with disabilities who are protected by the IDEA-2004, college students with disabilities are protected by the Office of Civil Rights, specifically, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The ADA Amendment Act of 2008 protects individuals with physical or mental impairments from discrimination in the workplace, school, or other environments. Section 504 (1973) protects individuals with disabilities from being discriminated against or denied participation in federally funded programs. Sense different legislation governs disability practices in postsecondary education, often times, students find that their documentation from high school does not fulfill the institutional requirements (NJCLD, 2007)

A national survey of undergraduate students revealed that 9% of college students reported having a learning disability (NPSAS, 2010). Many students with learning disabilities are academically underprepared for the rigors of higher education (Banco, 2011), and depending on their disability will find advanced college courses in reading, writing, and mathematics difficult (Hughes & Smith, 1990). Furthermore, more than half of those students with learning disabilities who were in special education in high school do not seek out additional assistance once entering postsecondary education (Wagner et al., 2003). Out of fear of being labeled, students with learning disabilities often times do not take advantage of the services that are provided to them based on their individual needs (Troiano et al., 2010). College students with diagnosed learning disabilities are eligible to receive additional support in writing and test preparation (Troiano et al., 2010). Most students with learning disabilities can also receive accommodations such as priority registration, counseling, alternative test taking environments, additional time on exams,

books in alternative format, and note takers (Troiano et al., 2010). Students with learning disabilities who utilize academic support programs often times have a higher GPA than those who do not utilize the services provided to them, and in turn, experience higher graduation rates. Of those who take advantage of their accommodations, nearly 30% of students with learning disabilities are in need of further assistance (Wagner et al., 2003).

Research has shown that race can predict learning disability classification (Talbott et al., 2011). Sense 1970, the percent of African American students being identified as learning disabilities has been increasing (Ong-Dean, 2006). In primary as well as secondary schools, African American students are being over-represented in special education classrooms (Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). According to the US Department of Education (2000), African Americans make up 14% of the population, but more than 18% of those ages 6-21 diagnosed with learning disabilities are African American. The act of over-identification is often referred to as disproportionally. Cortiella (2011) defines disproportionally as:

> the over- or under-representation of minority students in special education. In other words, there is a disproportionate number –either significantly larger or smaller percentage—of students form specific minority backgrounds receiving special education services than the parentage of that minority in the population generally (p. 12).

Although according to IDEA (1997) racial and cultural factors cannot be used in the diagnosis of learning disabilities, African American students experience greater odds of being identified with a learning disability (Talbott et al., 2011). African American students are more likely to be identified with a specific learning disability then their Caucasian

counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). A student's socioeconomic status, academic history, as well as native language appears to influence identification (Shifer et al., 2010). The study conducted by Shifer et al. (2010) revealed that due to the lower average socioeconomic status of Africa Americans, this population was more likely to be over identified with learning disabilities. Factors such as the size of the student's school district can play a role in learning disability identification. The smaller the school district, the more likely an individual is to be identified (Talbott et al., 2011). Similarly, the more certified teachers within a school, the increased likelihood that a student is to be diagnosed with a learning disability (Talbott et al., 2011). Another variable that can lead to identification is class attendance. Students who attended class were less likely to be identified with a learning disability then those who were truant (Talbott et al., 2011).

The over-representation of minority students in special education has led academics to believe that this practice is prejudicial and promotes segregation (Patton, 1998; Skiba et al., 2008). According to Skiba et al., (2008) labeling African Americans is just another way that they are put at a disadvantage. For some African Americans with learning disabilities, being placed in special education classrooms further perpetuates the stereotype that African Americans lack intelligence (Monroe, 2006). Low expectations from teachers and difficulty gaining acceptance from peers causes some African American males with learning disabilities to feel intellectually incapable (McDonald et al., 2007). Heubert (2002) believes that over-representation of African Americans in special education does not permit this population to enjoy the high quality education that is warranted. Due to the fact that African Americans are over-represented in special education, the diagnostic criteria used to identify learning disabilities needs to be examined to ensure that African Americans are not

being over-represented (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Shifer et al., 2011).

Like race, gender can also be used to determine the likelihood of an individual being identified (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Shifer et al., 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). Men are three times more likely than women to be identified with a learning disability (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Another study found men to be over-represented in the category of specific learning disabilities, with 66% of men being identified as having a learning disability (Shifer et al., 2011). Those in the female subgroup are under-represented, less likely to be identified with a learning disability (Talbott et al., 2011). There are significant implications that can result from failing to be diagnosed. Sadly, women who are not diagnosed will often face long-term academic, social, and emotional difficulties (Cortiella, 2009).

Stodden (2003) found that students are not being appropriately identified and diagnosed with learning disabilities in primary and secondary education. According to a study conducted by the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports (2002), 31% of respondents revealed that they were first identified with a learning disability in postsecondary education. More than seven percent (7.4%) of males in college as opposed to 3.3% of females have learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Unlike primary and secondary education where minorities are more likely to be identified with learning disabilities, at postsecondary institutions Caucasian males are more likely to be identified with a learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). One percent of African American college students have learning disabilities, whereas 5.8% of Caucasian college students have learning disabilities. Caucasian males with learning disabilities are likely to derive from a high-income household and have educated parents

(Vickers, 2010). While only 15.6% of students with specific learning disabilities attend a 4-year college or university, institutions of higher learning are seeing a spike in mild disabilities on campus (Vickers, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).. Despite a drop in identifying learning disabilities in primary and secondary education, there appears to be an increase in the population of students at colleges and universities (Vickers, 2010). Caucasian students with disabilities appear to be overrepresented on college campuses, 66% students who reported having a disability are Caucasian students, compared 12.7% of students who reported having a disability are black (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Some argue that this population is "playing the system" (Vickers, 2010). Essentially, by being diagnosed with a learning disability, individuals are eligible to receive academic accommodations and take advantage of easier admission standards (Camara, Cahalan, & Mandinach, 2002).

Learning disability stigma. Between the ages of five and 10 children become aware of stereotypes (Aronson, 1994; McKeon & Strambles, 2009). The adolescent years are crucial in cognitive development because students are figuring out their identity and sense of self-worth (Aronson, 2004). During this time, when academic testing has become familiar, many students begin to perceive their intellectual ability and that of others (Aronson, 2004). Children with learning disabilities experience difficulties gaining acceptance from their peers (Wiener, Harris, & Shirer, 1990). Students perceive those with learning disabilities negatively (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010; Wiener et al., 1990), and as such, students with learning disabilities are rejected, teased, and ignored (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). In a study of 6th and 7th grade students, those with learning disabilities were seen as less popular, attractive, and athletic

(Conderman, 1995). Due to the disapproval individuals with learning disabilities face, they experience a lower social status than their peers without disabilities (Conderman, 1995). It is falsely believed that learning disabilities are the fault of the parent or the child, and that those diagnosed with learning disabilities have limited mental capacity (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, students who have diagnosed learning disabilities find it is difficult to have relationships with their peers without disabilities because many students do not want to tarnish their reputations by associating themselves with this special population of students (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010).

Parents play a vital role in ensuring their child receives a free, appropriate public education (Lerner & Johns, 2012; IDEA-2004). Parents should constantly be gaining knowledge about learning disabilities, serving as advocates for their children's rights, and striving to ensure their child has the best possible educational experience (Lerner & Johns, 2012). The right of parents to be involved in their children's education is a prevision of the IDEA-2004. In regards to identification, this legislation gives the parent of the child the right to request that their child be evaluated or reevaluated, to be notified regarding when the school wants to evaluate the child or change the educational placement of the child, and to obtain an independent evaluation of their child. More recently, the Supreme Court ruled in the 2009 case of *Forrest Grove School District vs. T.A. (08-305)* that students are entitled to a prompt and suitable comprehensive evaluation to determine that student's eligibility for special education. Despite the right of parents to be involved in the education of their child, few parents consult an educator about learning disabilities (Tremaine Foundation, 2010).

Mothers of children with learning disabilities as more involved as well as controlling and appeared to be far less supportive of their children than mothers of children who do not have learning disabilities (Heiman et al., 2008; Humphries & Bauman, 1986; Margalit & Heiman, 1986). Families with children with learning disabilities were found to experience low aspects of social functioning, specifically in controlling the behavior and communicating with their children (Baigas, 2002). Mothers of children with learning disabilities were found to impact their child's feelings of hope, loneliness, and attachment (Al-Yagon, 2007). Furthermore, children with learning disabilities appeared to be sensitive regarding different parenting styles (Greenberg, Speltz, DeKlyen, & Jones, 2001). In order for children to be successful it is important that parents communicate their expectations as well as goals and values to their children (Riesch, Andrson, & Krueger, 2006). A recent study revealed that parents of youth with and without learning disabilities had similar perceptions of their relationships as well as communication with their children (Heiman et al., 2008). Mothers of children with learning disabilities were found to be more open regarding communication than fathers of children with learning disabilities (Himan et al., 2008). It was also discovered that mothers of children with learning disabilities reported more problematic value and norms when compared to mothers of children who did not have learning disabilities (Hilman et al., 2008). Interestingly enough, the youth surveyed (both with and without learning disabilities) did not differ in most of their perceptions of their relationship as well as communication with their parents (Hilman et al., 2008). Aside from parents' understanding of disabilities, the education level of parents appears to also be a factor that can affect identification. African American students that do not have college-educated parents were found to be over represented in special education

classrooms (Slavin, 2006). Parents of children with learning disabilities apparently believe that they can do more to help, with 75% of parents reporting they need to become more involved in their children's lives (NCLD, 2012).

Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder

IDEA-2004 legislation places Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) under the category of Other Health Impaired.

It is estimated that 4% to 12% of adolescents have ADHD (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001); however, many students with ADHD do not require special education services (Aaron et al., 2002). In order to be diagnosed with ADHD, symptoms must begin prior to the age of seven, last a minimum of six consecutive months before diagnosis, and should be recurrent and atypical of children developmentally (American Psychiatric Association, 2004). DSM-IV typically uses observation to diagnose children with one of the three types of ADHD: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, and combined (American Psychiatric Association, 2004). An individual who has inattention tends to be forgetful, disorganized, has difficulty focusing and listening, and may experience difficulties completing tasks (American Psychiatric Association, 2004). Symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity are inability to sit still, overly energetic, and speaks frequently (American Psychiatric Association, 2004). The third and most common variety of ADHD, combined subtype, is when an individual has characteristics of the inattention subtype, as well as hyperactivity and impulsivity subtype (American Psychiatric Association, 2004; Lahey et al., 2005).

It has been estimated that of those who have ADHD, 25% to 50% also have learning disabilities (Goldstein, 2007; Silver, 2006). However, one study found that a staggering 70% of the children with ADHD also had learning disabilities (Mayes, Calhoun, & Crowell,

2000). Children who have been diagnosed with both ADHD and learning disabilities appear to have more severe learning problems than those students who have just ADHD (Mayes et al., 2000).

Children in primary education with ADHD often experience difficulty sitting still and tend to talk quickly, loudly, and frequently (Lerner & Johns, 2012). At this age, children with ADHD often show aggression towards their peers due to lack of self-control (Bloh, 2009). Along with this belligerent behavior, children with ADHD in elementary school may constantly disrupt the class (McGoey et al., 2007). Frequently, children innocently exhibit traits that are often associated with ADHD, making ADHD difficult to diagnosis (Lindstrom, Tuckwiller, & Hallahan, 2008). Hallahan and Kauffman (2006) suggest that in order to ensure the child is accurately identified, a variety of assessments should be conducted. Practitioners should examine the family as well as school history of the child, conduct a medical exam, and observe the child in school, home, and recreational environments to gain a precise representation of the child (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). Furthermore, the amount of students being diagnosed with ADHD has increased drastically within the last decade (Lindstrom et al., 2008). Yet, because IDEA-2004 nestled ADHD within the category of Other Health Impaired, it is difficult to gain a transparent view of the situation (Lindstrom et al., 2008). Scholars feel that the numbers could be increasing due to more precise identification techniques, increased awareness, or false diagnosis (Landstrom et al., 2008).

As children with ADHD enter their adolescent years, possible academic, social, and behavioral issues may arise (DuPaul & Wayandy, 2006; Weyandt, 2007). Some students even experience depression and a low sense of self-worth (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Often,

those with ADHD have poor social skills, and in turn have difficulty interacting with their peers (Hoza, 2007). Students with ADHD often take longer to graduate from high school, and will most likely have a lower grade point average, standardized test scores, and class rank then their peers without disabilities (Advokat, Lane, & Luo, 2011). Furthermore, students with ADHD are less likely to attend college and are at high risk of dropping out of high school (Advokat et al., 2011; Mannuzza & Klein, 2000).

Upon entering college, students with ADHD are the second largest disability subgroup on campus (next to specific learning disabilities) to be served through the Office of Disability Services (Harbour, 2004). 11 percent of undergraduate student reported having ADHD (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Despite the fact that stimulants used to treat ADHD have not been shown to enhance long-term learning and application (Gualtieri & Johnson, 2008; Loe & Fildman, 2007), scholars fear that the sudden rise in ADHD identification is due to students' desire to use stimulants to ideally increase their academic performance (Advokat, Martino, & Guidry, 2008; Advokat et al., 2011; Barkley et al., 2003; & Blase et al., 2009). College students with ADHD are at risk of dropping out of school, experiencing emotional difficulties, and like to underperform in the classroom (Glutting, Monaghan, Adams, & Sheslow, 2002). Furthermore, those with ADHD tend to have lower grade point averages, and are more likely to be placed on academic probation (Samuelsson, Lundberg, & Herkner, 2004). There are more male students (8.6%) diagnosed with ADHD, while only 4.9% of college females have been identified with ADHD (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Although, in a self-reporting study more college females then makes reported experiencing symptoms of ADHD (Lee, Oakland, Jackson, & Glutting, 2008). Caucasian students are more likely to be identified with ADHD, with 7.7%

of Caucasian students on college campuses having ADHD and 3.8% of African American students had ADHD (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). The literature addressing when the majority of students with ADHD were identified seems to provide conflicting results. Advokat et al. (2011) discovered that a majority of her undergraduate students sample had been identified with ADHD five years prior to entering college. The sample of another study revealed that nearly 45% of those with ADHD were diagnosed upon entering institutions of higher learning (NCSPES, 2002).

Children of every ethnic group and gender can be affected by ADHD (Lerner & Johns, 2012). However, Caucasian students ages 6 through 21 are nearly 1.5 times more likely to be included in the "other health impairments" category, more than any other racial or ethnic group (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Once on a college campus, Caucasian males from privileged backgrounds are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD (Vickers, 2010). The rise in ADHD identification has resulted in more students choosing to combat their ADHD symptoms with prescription stimulants (Advokat et al., 2011; Vickers, 2010). Drug use associated with ADHD management has increased 40% sense 2005 (Vickers, 2010). Aside from students with ADHD, general students are taking stimulants to improve their academic performance by staying up later to study or to better concentrate (Advokat, Martino, & Guidry, 2008; Advokat et al., 2011; Barkley et al., 2003; & Blase et al., 2009). A recent study revealed that students with ADHD who take stimulants have lower college GPAs and are more likely to withdrawal from a course than those who do not take stimulants (Advokat et al., 2011). Thus, it appears that students, especially Caucasian males with ADHD are getting diagnosed with ADHD in order to get additional academic support and to gain access to prescription drugs (Advokat, Martino, & Guidry, 2008; Advokat et al.,

2011; Barkley et al., 2003; Blase et al., 2009; & Vickers, 2010).

Males are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD then their coeds (Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Shaywitz, 1995). Girls tend to display less aggressive behavior, and as such are not as readily diagnosed with ADHD (Arnold, 1996; Brito, Pinto, & Lins, 1994). Males are often times referred for ADHD testing due to restless conduct (Lahey et al., 1994; Williams & Swanson; 1994). Arnold (1996) has another explanation as to why girls do not appear to be identified, revealing that characteristics of ADHD may not manifest the same in both genders. ADHD is as prevalent in girls as it is boys (Lerner & Johns, 2012), In fact, girls have more of a genetic link to ADHD then boys (Biederman, 1994). It is important that girls are identified with ADHD, to ensure that they receive the proper accommodations that will assist them in achieving academically (Arnold, 1996).

Parents appear to have little understanding of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Bussing, Schoenberg, & Perwien, 1998). A study revealed that African American parents were less aware then Caucasian parents of disability law and the responsibility that the school has to test, identify, and provide accommodating to students with disabilities (Bussing et al., 1998). Caucasian parents were more likely than their African American counterparts to develop a long term course of action that would ensure their child with a disability was placed in interventions that would fulfill the child's specific needs (Bussing et al., 1998). Interestingly enough, Caucasian parents identified ADHD with a medical label caused by genetic factors whereas African American referred to ADHD with a bad child label (Bussing et al., 1998). Parents involved in the study expressed a desire to have their child with ADHD take part in some sort of intervention (i.e. community, school, family-based, medical) in hopes of reducing the symptoms of ADHD. Caucasian parents

were more likely than African American parents to involve their child in an intervention program at school (Bussing et al., 1998). With intervention, parents were hopeful that their child would have a better opportunity of academic success. However, African American parents viewed academic success as a less likely outcome (Bussing et al., 1998). Similarly, Lee et al. (2008) found that African American parents appeared to be less aware of symptoms of ADHD, and were less likely to communicate concerns regarding ADHD related behavior when compared to Caucasian parents.

Student-Athletes with Learning Disabilities

Despite media reports that at some NCAA member institutions as many as 24% of student-athletes have diagnosed learning disabilities ("College Teams Exploit," 2009), little academic research has focused on the issue of student-athletes with learning disabilities. Student-athletes are a population with special needs and unusual pressures (Gayles, 2009; Papanikolaou et al., 2003). Student-athletes experience loneliness, frustration, homesickness, discouragement, self-doubt, and a sense that no one cares (Papanikolaou et al., 2003). Furthermore, faculty and students often associate student-athletes with negative stereotypes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). Many athletes who have been diagnosed with ADHD experience poor self-esteem and low frustration tolerance (Kiluk, Weden, & Culotta, 2009). Student-athletes with learning disabilities often suffer social as well as emotional challenges (Clark & Parette, 2002). In fact, the stereotypes surrounding student-athletes intensify if he or she has a learning disability (Clark & Parette, 2002). Due to the fact that many athletes feel that they have little self-worth outside of their sport (Papanikolaou et al., 2003), some individuals with learning disabilities find the only place that they can be seen as equal to their peers without disabilities is on the playing field (Kiluk et al., 2009).

Furthermore, for those student-athletes with ADHD, participating in intercollegiate athletics could provide them with the exercise needed to assist them in treating their disability (Kreher, 2012).

Off the playing field, student-athletes with learning disabilities often experience problems in mathematics, written expression, and reading (Barton & Fuhrmann, 1994; Clark & Parette, 2002). For some student-athletes with learning disabilities, academic difficulties can lead to emotional and social dissatisfaction (Barton & Fuhrmann, 1994; Clark & Parette, 2002). A survey of N4A (1997) members disclosed that 2.7% of the student-athlete population had a learning disability. Many Division I universities have services in place to assist student-athletes with learning disabilities; however, providing a quality education and teaching applicable life skills to student-athletes with learning disabilities is not a priority among some institutions of higher learning (Clark & Parette, 2002). Although 75% of athletic academic advisors possess master's degrees (NCAA, 2009b); most individuals working with this population of student-athlete are unqualified, and due to a lack of sufficient training, the needs of student-athletes with learning disabilities are not being met (Clark & Perette, 2002). Building collaborative relationships with resources on campus (i.e. faculty members, disability services) assists athletic academic advisors in meeting the needs of student-athletes with learning disabilities (N4A 2007; White, 2008). Although academic support programs for student-athletes with learning disabilities are warranted, it is important that student-athletes with learning disabilities diversify, and meet individuals outside their peer group (Clark & Perrett, 2002). Academic support personnel should encourage members of this population to be independent and self-motivated, ensuring that student-athletes with learning disabilities

live a full life, growing into community leaders, and ensuring that they have the optimal collegiate experience (Clark & Perrett, 2002; Weiss, 2011).

Weiss (2011) explains that student-athletes with learning disabilities need structure and centralized support. Learning assistance program, coupled with meetings with a learning specialist can assist student-athletes with learning disabilities throughout the transition process (Weiss, 2011). Similarly, Clark and Perette (2002) provide suggestions on how to best serve the growing number of student-athletes with learning disabilities. Student-athletes with learning disabilities should be informed about their accommodations, and taught strategies to optimize learning (Clark & Perette, 2002). Student-athletes who have learning disabilities are often aware of the negative stigma surrounding them; as such, it is important for those working with this population to provide positive reinforcement (Clark & Perette, 2012). Although there are academic plans in place to assist student-athletes with learning disabilities, little is being done to evaluate the impact that such programs are making (Clark & Perette, 2012; Weiss, 2011).

The N4A (2007) surveyed 168 athletic academic support personnel who represented 45 different athletic conferences, primarily at the NCAA Division I level. The survey revealed that 45% of participants had a program specifically for student-athletes with learning disabilities (N4A, 2007). Of the athletic academic support personnel surveyed, 17 individuals stated that their athletic institution screened all student-athletes for learning disabilities, and 22 individuals reported that student-athletes were individually selected and screened for potential learning disabilities (N4A, 2007). When asked about how many student-athletes at their respected institutions were diagnosed with a learning disabilities or ADHD, three individuals reported their institutions had over

100 student-athletes with learning disabilities or ADHD, 24 respondents revealed having 20-29 student-athletes at their institution with learning disabilities, and 21 individuals expressed that their institution has 10 to 19 student-athletes with learning disabilities or ADHD (N4A, 2007). The survey also asked questions of those who worked with student-athletes with learning disabilities, referred to as a learning specialist (N4A, 2007). Learning specialist expressed several concerns about working with student-athletes with learning disabilities. Some learning specialists reported lacking the knowledge and training to work with this population and others cited that the athletic coaches did not understand learning disabilities; however, the main concern appeared to be the percentage of student-athletes that were being referred to be tested for a learning disability (N4A, 2010).

The NCAA (2009b) conducted a survey of the resources and behaviors of NCAA Division I member institutions regarding academic support success. The survey revealed that 3% of all NCAA Division I student-athletes have been assessed for learning disabilities (NCAA, 2009b). Most NCAA institutions do not assess student-athletes for learning disabilities. The NCAA (2009b) reported that 39% of NCAA Division I student-athletes are not tested for learning disabilities. The NCAA (2009b) reported a statistically significant difference regarding the portions of student-athletes assessed for learning disabilities in Division I FBS and Division I FCS. Student-athletes participating in Division I FBS were more likely to be screened for learning disabilities than those in Division I FCS (NCAA, 2009b). To assist in meeting the needs of student-athletes with learning disabilities, half of the athletic academic advisors at NCAA Division I institutions reporting having an educational program devoted solely to student-athletes with learning disabilities (NCAA, 2009b).

White (2008) examined the experiences of NCAA Division I male student-athletes in traditional revenue producing sports who were enrolled in a program for at-risk student-athletes. Some of the participants in the study included student-athletes with learning disabilities. The participants explained to White (2008) that they received preferential treatment in high school due to their athletic ability. One participant in particular explained that he did not meet NCAA initial eligibility requirements; however, the recruiting coach informed him that if he was diagnosed with a learning disability that some of the initial eligibility requirements could be waved and he would be deemed a qualifier (White, 2008). Other student-athletes told White (2002) that they were non-qualifiers out of high school, and had to attend junior colleges prior to transferring to the institution. A major theme that appeared in data was labeling (White, 2008). Most of the participants felt overwhelmed by their course load, and did not take advantage of accommodations or ask faculty members for assistance out of fear of being labeled with a disability (White, 2008). Further, some of the participants felt that the faculty, staff, and even peers held them to low academic standards (White, 2008). The student-athletes relationship with their coach, and the willingness for their coach to help them, provided the participants with incentives and encouragement which appeared to play a significant role in the experience of most of the participants (White, 2008). White (2008) concluded that through education and perseverance, student-athletes could possibly overcome their perceived perception of being labeled; ultimately, providing the student-athletes with a more satisfying experience.

NCAA Statistics

On average, NCAA Division I institutions sponsor 19 intercollegiate sports for both men (8.7) and women (10.3); which provide sport participation opportunities for 169,037

student-athletes (Irick, 2011). Caucasian male and female student-athletes are the largest racial group in NCAA Division I (Zgonc, 2010). Caucasian male athletes sonstitute 62.5% of all NCAA Division I male student-athletes, and Caucasian female student-athletes make up 70.6% of NCAA Division I female student-athletes (Zgonc, 2010). Intercollegiate athletic participation among African American Division I student-athletes has increased (Zgonc, 2010). African American male (24.9%) and female (19%) student-athletes are the second largest racial group competing within NCAA Division I (Zgonc, 2010). For the first time in NCAA documented history, African American, student-athletes constituted the highest percentage of NCAA Division I football student-athletes with 45.8%, Caucasian student-athletes constitute 45.1% of the sport (Zgonc, 2010). In merely just more than a decade, African American participation in NCAA Division I football has seen an increase of more than 15% (Zgonc, 2010). When the NCAA first began tracking student-athlete racial and ethnicity data, in 1999, African American student-athletes represented 30.5% of all NCAA Division I football (Zgonc, 2010). African American student-athletes also have a large presence in NCAA Division I basketball, representing the highest percentage of male (60.9%) and female (51%) participants (Zgonc, 2010).

There are 120 teams competing in Division I FBS, with a total of 14,303 student-athletes participating (Irick, 2011). Within Division I FBS, African American student-athlete make up 47.4% of the division, while Caucasian NCAA FBS student-athletes comprise 43% (Zgonc, 2010). Caucasian participation in Division I FBS has decreased 5.7% sense 1999 (Zgonc, 2010). Zgonc (2010) identifies Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander as the third largest racial group (2.6%) in Division I FBS, followed by other (2.9%), Hispanic (2.4%), two or more races (1.2%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (.4%). FCS has

11,784 teams participate, with 11,784 student-athletes (Irick, 2011). Caucasian student-athletes amount to (47.6%) of Division I-FCS, followed by African American (43.9%), other (3%), Hispanic (2.5%), two or more races (1.5%), Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (1.2%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (.4%).

With the increase in specially admitted students throughout the NCAA (Gerney et al., 2010), NCAA Division I institutions are investing millions of dollars in lavish academic centers to ensure the student-athletes are meeting NCAA eligibility standards (Wolverton, 2008). Nearly all Division I-FBS institutions (88%) have an academic center for their student-athletes (NCAA, 2009b). The academic support budget for Division I FBS ranged from $20,000 to $2.6 million, with a mean of $655,098 (NCAA, 2009b). In comparison, Division I FCS academic support budgets ranged from zero to $460,000, with a mean of $154,980. Academic support budgets for the nation's premier intercollegiate athletic institutions are on the rise (Wolverton, 2008). On average, institutions are investing over a $1 million per year in athletic academic support (Wolverton, 2008). The University of Oklahoma has the largest academic support budget in the country, spending $2.9 million per year (Wolverton, 2008). That adds up to more than $6,000 for each Oklahoma student-athlete (Wolverton, 2008). The Ohio State University, an institution that has one of the largest athletic budgets in the country, spends $2.3 million a year on academic support cost. Within the last 15 years, money that The Ohio State University invested in its athletic academic support program quadrupled (Wolverton, 2008). In 2003, The University of Mississippi held 50 tutorial sessions a week in its academic center (Wolverton, 2008). Division I FBS institutions spent $105,000 (median) on tutorial services; in turn, Division I

FCS institutions spent $11,500 (mean) (Fulks, 2009). The gap between the 22 athletic departments who are deemed profitable and those who are not is widening (Fulks, 2010).

In 2010, Division I FBS institutions had three major sources of revenue: ticket sales ($9.53 million), NCAA and conference distributions ($6.24 million), and donor contributions ($6.75 million) (Fulks, 2010). Aside from salaries ($6.8 million), the second highest operating expense within Division I FBS is grant-in-aid. The median grant-in-aid cost for men's scholarships at Division I FBS public institutions was $3.57 million. The median generated revenue for men's Division I FBS football is $16.21 million (Fulks, 2010). The median net revenue for Division I FBS is $3.15 million (Fulks, 2010).

The majority of the money coming into Division I FCS institutions is allocated revenue. The top three sources for the median revenue in Division I FCS public institutions is: direct institutional support ($11.2 million), student fees ($2.18 million), and donor contributions ($700,000) (Fulks, 2010). Similarly to Division I FBS, the mean Division I FCS operating expenses are derived from salaries ($1.57 million) followed by grand-in-aid (1.79 million) (Fulks, 2010).

Student-Athlete Experience

Student-athletes face constant adversity, and often have difficulty balancing both athletic and academic obligations (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Gayles, 2009; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Jolly, 2008). Due the heightened demands placed on student-athletes, colleges and universities have invested a lot of money in academic services to assist in supporting the needs of student-athletes (Gayles, 2009; Gayles & Hu, 2009). Budgets for athletic academic support programs at major institutions have more than doubled over the last decade (Wolverton, 2008).

Recent studies examining the student-athlete experience focused on academically at-risk student-athletes. A study of first year freshman at-risk football student-athletes competing in Division I FBS revealed that the student-athletes were not very intrinsically motivated, with sport participation being one of the main reasons why these student-athletes enrolled in higher education (Monda, 2011). An investigation of specially admitted student-athletes at an FBS institutions concluded that student-athletes were more likely to have difficulties adjusting to campus life and experience a low sense to self-worth (Gurney, Tan, & Winters, 2010).

Some scholars assert that due to the intensity of college sport, student-athletes are denied a well-rounded experience (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). However, a national survey of student-athletes revealed that student-athletes tend to have a positive experience and view their experience as well rounded (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). Student-athletes attribute their participation in intercollegiate athletics with learned skills that can be used to assist them upon entering the work force (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). Although student-athletes feel that sport participation has provided them with positive traits, participation in intercollegiate athletics has not been shown to increase academic motivation or self-perception (Wolniak, Pierson, & Pascarella, 2001).

Athletic coaches, immediate family members, teammates, and faculty members appeared to play a large role in contributing to the academic success of student-athletes (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Watt & Moore, 2001). Although the majority of student-athletes surveyed believed that their professors played a role in their academic success, student-athletes reported being treated differently by faculty members due to their status as a student-athlete (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). The dedication that some student-athletes have

to their sport inhibits them from declaring demanding majors out of fear of ineligibility (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007).

Due to the immense amount of time that focuses on athletics, 60% of the student-athletes responded that they feel they are more athletes than students (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). At the collegiate level, athletes who feel such an extreme dedication to their sport develop the identity of an "athlete" (Houle, Brewer, Kluck, 2010). Male student-athletes often demonstrate their athletic identity through a heightened sense of masculinity and competiveness (Coakley, 2007). Student-athletes are not viewed as students, and at times are treated like celebrities (McQueen & Klein, 2006).

Much of the literature focuses on comparing the experiences of student-athletes to the experiences of their non-athlete peers. Both student-athletes as well as their peers who do not participate in intercollegiate athletics face challenges in higher education, student-athletes much balance sport requirements with the obligations that come with being a college student (Watt & Moore, 2001). Richards and Aries (1999) found that there appeared to be no difference between student-athletes and their non-athlete peers regarding the amount of time spent studying or attending class, as well as their academic performance (measured by GPA). Other studies have found that student-athletes do not perform as well academically when compared to their peers who do not participate in intercollegiate athletics (Bowen & Levine, 2003; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Male student-athlete were shown to have lower grades than their peers; however, the quality of education as well as the overall experiences of student-athletes appeared to be superior to their non-athlete peers (Umbach et al., 2006).

Student-athletes have a college experience that in uniquely their own (Gayles, 2009; Gayles & Ku, 2009; Harmon, 2010; Jolly, 2008). Thus, understanding the experience of student-athletes is vital to understanding the specific needs of this population (Harmon, 2010). Participating in intercollegiate athletics can prove beneficial to student-athletes by allowing student-athletes to learn time management skills, acquire discipline, and experience increased self-esteem (Harmon, 2010; Jolly, 2008). By better understanding the student-athletes experience, student-athletes will be better supported (Harmon, 2010; Jolly,2008). Furthermore, through learning more about the student-athletes population could spark students, faculty, and staff to better understand student-athletes, thus, the negative percepts that such groups have of student-athletes may be altered (Harmon, 2010).

Stereotype Threat Theory

Stereotype Threat Theory centers around well-known negative stereotypes that involve a group of individuals (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Specifically, stereotype threat is "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Through the existence of stereotypes, often times the features, characteristics, and actions of those in a particular social group confirm and perpetuate the stereotype, leaving those in the group that is perceived through negative stereotypes to believe and even exhibit the characteristics of the negative stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The initial purpose behind stereotype threat was to examine factors that suppressed the testing performance of African American as well as female students in the areas of math, science, and engineering (Steele, 2011). However, scholars in

diverse disciplines soon realized that stereotype threat applies to many different situations (Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012).

Racial vulnerability is the premise behind the notion of stereotype threat (S. Steele, 1991). This idea is one in which an individual is a product of their environment, and as such after being engulfed in a culture that perceives their abilities, that individual is likely to allow those ideas to become an integral part of their beliefs (S. Steele, 1991). There are external factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural differences, as well as discrimination that can impact how individuals view their social world (S. Steele, 1991). Stereotype threat does not focus on such factors, yet instead centers are the situation by inferring that the existence as well as the awareness "of cultural stereotypes creates a fundamentally different experience and awareness of cultural stereotypes creates a fundamentally different experience for those who are stereotyped to be less competent, an experience that systemically impairs their ability to perform to their potential" (Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012, p. 7). Ultimately, it is the situation rather than the circumstances that stereotype threat seeks to understand. Steele (1997) refers to such threat as "situational circumstances" (p. 617).

Stereotype Threat Theory begins with the notion that each individual has several different social identities (i.e. race, gender, age) (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). Thus, based on the situation that an individual is involved in, that individual will then establish what identity is important to portray in that particular setting (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). Schmader, Johns, and Forbes (2008) explain "stereotype threat is triggered by situations that post a significant threat to self-integrity, the sense of oneself as a coherent and values entity that is adaptable to the environment" (p. 337). The identity cues that are established

from the environment are referred to as the vigilance process of stereotype threat (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). For some, the vigilance process begins as they survey their surroundings searching for some type of validation to their social identity, while others may be completely aware of the stigma that is associated with their social identity (Murphy & Taylor, 2012; Pinel. 1999, 2004). In a social environment, individuals can find themselves having to disconfirm or confirm. Certain social environments will lead individuals to disconfirm, where they are likely to face stigma or possible mistreatment (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). Other social environments "confirm the possibility that one's social identity is likely to be negatively evaluated, vigilance increases" (Murphy & Taylor, 2012, p. 19). Individuals may even use the situation as motivation, in essence, attempting disprove the stereotype (Dee, 2009). Individuals must evaluate their social situation by clarifying its meaning, and as such determine whether or not and to what degree they will engage in the vigilance process (Murphy & Taylor, 2012).

Researchers have discovered that factors such as anxiety (Spencer, Steele, Quinn, 1999), self-doubt (Steele & Aronson, 1995), memory (Schmader & Johns, 2003) as well as arousal (Ben-Zeev, Fein, & Inzlicht, 2005) can lead to stereotype threat. There are also different types of stereotype threat, a threat to one's self or a threat to one's group construct (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). Schmader et al. (2008) believes that three core concepts generate situational cues that bring about stereotype threat.

1. "First, cues in the environmental signal a negative propositional relation between one's concept of the in-group and ability in a given domain such that the group is defined in that context" (Schmader et al., 2008, p. 338).

2. "Second, cues in the environment make salient one's membership in the stigmatized group by activating a positive link between one's concept of self and one's concept of group such that the self Is defined in terms of the group membership in that context" (Schmader et al., 2008, p. 339).

3. "The third link that contributes to the imbalance is a positive propositional relation primed between self and domain such that the self-concept is associated with doing well in that context because of either an expectation of success or strong motivation to excel" (Schmader et al., 2008, p. 339).

Through the use of stereotype threat, Steele and Aronson's original work (1995) serves to provide an understanding as to why African American students tend to score lower on standardized exams in comparison to their Caucasian peers. In their study, Steele and Aronson (1995) discovered that "black participants performed worse than white participants when the test was presented as a measure of their ability, but improved dramatically, matching the performance of Whites, when the test was presented as less reflective of ability" (p. 801). The results concluded that negative stereotypes do exist and in suitable situations an individual from a particular social group can conform to the negative stereotype, demonstrating traits that confirm the stereotype to those who are aware of the stigma (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Constantly, African American students face judgments about their intellectual ability (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The preconceived notions regarding the mental capability of African American students ultimately creates a threat that leaves this population venerable to the negative judgments that society has placed upon them (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Ultimately, it is these assumptions and pressure to appease the stereotype were found to be the social cues that interfered with the student's performance throughout this particular study (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The fact that performance can be manipulated simply by how the task is described as well by individuals who are distributing the task was also an important finding of this study (Steele & Aronson, 1995). When faced with constant burden of stereotype threat, over time some members of this population may extricate themselves from scholastic activities (Steele & Aronson, 1995). When underachievement consistently occurs, it becomes an expectation. When the expectation for African American students is low, self-doubt sets in, and students often do not exceed the expectations because many do not feel that overachievement is a reality (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

According to Steele (1997) there are several general features of stereotype threat (p. 617-618):

1. Stereotype threat is not limited to a single population and can affect individuals in any group that experience negative stigmas.
2. Stereotype threat can occur at any time and in any situation. It is controlled by the how the individuals responds to the negative stereotype
3. The threat and the severity of its possible impact is dependent upon the group.
4. Stereotype threat can be experienced even if an individual does not believe the stereotype,
5. In order for a stereotype to be overcome, it must be disproved.

Stereotype Threat Theory can be applied to a wide range of real life situations (Steele & Aronson, 1995), as has been used to describe educational outcomes as well as

experiences (Inzlich & Schmader, 2012). Despite the popularity of Stereotype Threat Theory (Aronson, 1994; Massey et al., 2003), few studies use stereotype threat to examine individuals with learning disabilities or student-athletes populations (Aquino, 2011).

Using stereotype threat as a means to study the student-athlete population appears to be a rather new initiative. Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, and Darley (1999) conducted the first study on the role of stereotype threat in sport. The study revealed that: both African American and Caucasian athletes preformed equally well when told the test was measuring their sports psychology (Stone et al., 1999). However, black athletes performed significantly better than Caucasian athletes when told the test was measuring their athletic intelligence (Stone et al., 1999). Other studies have shown that the stigma associated with athletic participation at large institutions could contribute to the academic underperformance of student-athletes involved in historically revenue producing sports (Bowen & Levin, 2003). Similarly, Yopyk and Prentice (2005) discovered that when they asked student-athletes to write about their athletic success prior to completing a math test, student-athletes were less accurate than other groups (i.e. choir). Thus, confirming that stereotype threat could contribute to the underperformance of student-athletes (Yopvk & Prentice, 2005). Prior to taking a standardized test, Dee (2009) asked student-athletes in the experimental group to fill out a questionnaire regarding their athletic experience, whereas those in the control group answered questions regarding campus dining. Results indicated that those impacted by the threat scored 14% below the mean on the standardized exam (Dee, 2009). This study confirmed that stereotype threat negatively impacts the academic performance of student-athletes (Dee, 2009). Stereotype threat has also been found to reduce the academic performance of female student-athletes (Harrison,

Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, & Rullan, 2009). Harrison et al. (2009) attributed the treat to the fact that when the participants were referred to as "scholar-athletes," they associated themselves with the negative academic stereotype surrounding the population. Although sport scholars are just recently using stereotype threat to examine the field, there are limited studies that examine this topic. In a study comparing Caucasian and African American male student-athletes it was determined that referring to the population as scholar-athletes heightened the treat for African American student-athletes; however, Caucasian student-athletes appeared rather unfazed by the label (Stone, Harrison, & Mottley, 2012)

Student-Athlete stigma and stereotypes. It has been well documented that personal identity develops during adolescent years (Elking, 1981; Erikson 1959, 1968, 1982; Marcia, 1989). Often times, those students who are star athletes identify themselves as an athlete at a young age (Miller, 2008). Identity is the individuals combined experiences connected to their interpretations of reality as well as behavioral expectations (Miller, 2008; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Specifically, athletic identify refers to the extent in which an individual embraces his or her athletic role (Brewer, Van Raalete, & Linder, 1993). When the sole focus of an individual's identity is that of an athlete, the stereotype threat only elevates; in turn, diminishing any type of academic motivation (Yopyk & Prentive, 2005). Students who excel in athletics often have the perception of themselves tangled up in the fact that he or she is an athlete (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Kornspan & Etzel, 2001). Athlete identities can negatively impact an individual's academics as well as social aptitude (Ryske, 2002), reinforcing the fact that athletes are not supposed to be smart and motivated; after all, they are dumb jocks (Burke, 1993; Nelson, 1983; Watt & Moore, 2001).

Children become aware of stereotypes by the age of six (Aronson, 1994). Research has shown that children's ability to comprehend and evaluate stereotypes increases with age and as such, so does the individual's likelihood of experiencing stereotype threat (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Results indicated that 18% of six year olds had the ability to infer an individual's stereotype; whereas nearly all (93%) of 10-year-old children could infer stereotypes (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Children who are middle school aged or older appear to be at the greatest risk of experiencing stereotype threat (Aguino, 2011). It is through these stereotypes that many individuals base their assessments of certain groups (Devine, 1989). Ironically, children from stigmatized social groups were shown to have a greater awareness of stereotypes than children from non-stigmatized social groups (McKoen & Weinstein, 2003).

Often times, students who are gifted interscholastic athletes get through primary and secondary education with minimal effort (Beem, 2006; Guthring, 2004). Furthermore, participation in interscholastic sport can cause students to perform poorly in the classroom due to missing class for athletic events or being distracted by sport participation (Beem, 2006; Guthring, 2004). For some interscholastic athletes, athletic talent takes priority over academic merit (Beem, 2006; Guthring, 2004). Coaches at this level pressured to produce results. There have been instances of teachers altering grades to ensure outstanding interscholastic athletes are eligible to compete, and ultimately have the necessary academic credentials to participate at the next level (Beem, 2006). This type of action expresses to interscholastic athletes that academic endeavors are not important, creating low expectations for athletes (Benson, 2000). In fact, many successful interscholastic athletes as well as student-athletes have little expectations for themselves expectations outside of

the gym (Galipeau & Trudel, 2004; MacNamara & Collins, 2010; Papanikolaou et al., 2003; Perdy, 1983; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005).

Upon entering higher education, student-athletes have been identified as being "dumb jocks," and based on that perception student-athletes are held to low academic standards (Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001; Preacco, 2009). Student-athletes are aware of how they are perceived; however, they do not feel that these stereotypes depict them as an individual (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Manul, 2002). Still, student-athletes are often not expected to be smart or motivated (Burke, 1993; Nelson, 1983; Watt & Moore, 2001). Negative perceptions of student-athletes only perpetuate the stereotype. A study of undergraduate student's perceptions of student-athletes revealed that Caucasian male students believed student-athletes lacked intelligence and were enrolled in a less challenging curriculum to ensure athletic eligibility (Sailes, 1996). Faculty members often express negativity towards student-athletes out of resentment towards the special treatment student-athletes are given in regards to admissions and academic support (Balcom & Lantz, 2001).

The negative and constant portrayal of educational struggles of African American students has been well documented (Coakley, 2007). African American males appear to face greater stigmas than any other group (McDonald, Keys, & Balcazar, 2007). Scholars believe that African Americans face an increased threat due to decades of racial intolerance (Hodge, Burden, Robinson, & Bennett III, 2008). Not only are African Americans portrayed as having low intellectual capabilities, but are viewed as lazy and poor as well (McDonald et al., 2007; McIntosh, 2002). Due to the increase of African Americans participating in organized sport, specifically the large presence of African Americans competing within the

NCAA (Irick, 2011), African American student-athletes are expected to demonstrate athletic superiority (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). The pressure to perform well athletically often can cause anxiety and low confidence levels in African American males (Stone et al., 1999). Although African American are viewed as having enhanced athletic abilities when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, the intellectual capability of African American student-athletes is seen as far lower than that of Caucasian student-athletes (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004).

Conclusion

The review of the literature reveals that there is a need to explore this sub-population of student-athletes. Thus, the next chapter will specifically focus on the why qualitative research was the best method to learn about the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD and the procedure for this study. Furthermore, Chapter Three will reveal my epistemology as well as my own struggles as an individual who has a learning disability and ADHD.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Epistemology

Especially within qualitative enquiry, it is critical that I, as the researcher, am aware of my paradigm and ensure my position is clearly stated (Creswell, 2007). A paradigm is simply "how does the researcher know what she or he knows" (Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Guba and Lincoln (1998) describe a paradigm as the worldview that assists in directing the investigator with the research study. In essence, a paradigm acts as a set of beliefs about how individuals view their world, view their role in the world, and interpret reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

I view the world through a radical humanist lens (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The radical humanist believes that reality is socially constructed, seeks to criticize the status quo, and believes that society is limiting individuals from fulfilling their full potential (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). People are subjected to the ideologies of society, and a social system that alienates them, preventing fulfillment (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Radical humanists feel that human beings are inhumane (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The truth is a product of circumstance, and, as such, should not to be generalized (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Radical humanists' main concern is attempting to discover why ideological domination transpires, and what can be done to change society; ultimately, this allows human beings to be free from a binding social system (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

I believe that reality is socially constructed, and we are products of our environments, and consequences of circumstance. I feel that many individuals are very compliant, and lack the necessary motivation to strive for social reform. Individuals do

what society expects of them, and those who go against societal norms or do not fit into societal norms are scrutinized. Perceptions are based upon preconceived notions regarding who people are and what they should be. When individuals fail to reach expectations, a label is placed on him or her to provide us with some sort of clarity as to why this individual is different. Often, I feel, we are products of the status quo, and because we choose not to be agents of change, we remain content with the way things are.

As such, we are preventing people from truly making something of themselves and their environments, although I'm sure my mom would tell you that maybe I should listen to society norms once in a while, and, simply comply. I strive to critically analyze my surroundings and make a positive impact in my environment. I believe in practical and practitioner-based research. The purpose of research is to gain increased knowledge about a question, and, to use that knowledge for the betterment of society. Although I do not seek to generalize, I think that we can all benefit through learning from the experiences of others. Every experience that we do not learn from is a wasted effort. I want my research to matter, to serve as a foundation for social change, and to encourage further exploration. Ultimately, we are a society that is interdependent on one another, and we should strive to inspire people to fulfill their fullest potential.

Positionality

As an individual who has a diagnosed learning disability, I strive to make sense of this reality. Although reality will most likely always be imperfect (Guba & Lincoln 2000, 2005), as it is important to study those individuals with learning disabilities in order to assist change agents in improving the lives of these individuals. Words can be strong, influential, and hurtful. Being referred to by peers as "stupid," "dumb," "lazy," and

"unmotivated" repeatedly from a young age can have a profound impact on these individuals.

Race, gender, class. I am a 25-year-old Caucasian female, the oldest of three children. My sister, Laura, is 22 months younger than I am. My brother, Alex, came along two years after Laura was born. Being the oldest and one of two girls, my parents always raised me to be very independent. I was never told that because I was a girl I was incapable or inferior. In fact, Laura and I were told by our parents that we were better than the boys; we were smarter and more athletic. We were encouraged to play sports, take dance, and to strive in school.

My parents, Jeff and Julie, are both college-educated. Dad works as a civil engineer and my mom is a housewife. I had a wonderful and happy childhood, growing up in the suburbs of Chicago. Our parents raised my siblings and I to be very selfless. Although we had money, we earned everything that we had, and it was always important to give back to those who were less fortunate. My parents sought to instill in their children a sense of equality; we were taught, "in God's eyes we're all equal."

It is important to note, that I am the spawn of a privileged upbringing. I would describe myself as being very "loved," although some of those in my life may refer to me as spoiled. My mother stayed at home and took care of my siblings and me. She would read to us nightly before we went to bed. If we every struggled in school, my parents would not only assist us with our homework or in teaching us the material, but my brother, sister, and I also had tutors. Even to this day, I am fortunate that my parents care about me and are very involved in my life.

College sport. College sport has always been a part of my life. My dad was a football center for the University of Missouri from 1977 to1981. Growing up, my dad frequently traveled for his job. He would only come home on the weekends. Those weekends were spent watching sports, specifically college football. My siblings and I were raised under the premise that a good weekend was when Michigan and Notre Dame lost in the same weekend, and if Missouri lost, it was a bad week. Needless to say, during the 1990s, we had a plethora of bad weeks.

My brother, sister, and I were always encouraged to play sports. When we were young we participated in gymnastics, soccer, and basketball. In middle school, I began to play volleyball and because I played volleyball, of course, my younger sister, Laura, had to play volleyball, too. Laura excelled in the sport and by the age of 15 she was an All-American volleyball player. Laura would go on to play volleyball within the NCAA at the University of Kentucky, where she made the NCAA tournament every year she participated. My brother played football and basketball. Until this day, he still holds our high school record for the most touchdowns scored in a single game (with three). Although he had the opportunity to play college sport, his dream of becoming a medical doctor did not allow him the time to be a student-athlete.

I participated in water polo throughout high school. Participating in college was not in my future. However, sport had been such a big part of my life, I knew I had to remain in sport in some capacity. So, when it came time to pick a college, I had to go to a school that had sport management as an undergraduate major. Being raised a Missouri fan, and in essence, a Big 12 fan, I went to the University of Kansas. At the time, Kansas was one of two schools in the Big 12 that had sport management as an undergraduate major.

While at Kansas, I had the opportunity to work in football recruiting on game days, ensuring that the NCAA rules regarding game day recruiting were followed. The summer after my sophomore year, I did a summer internship in football operations at Stanford University. Stanford had just hired head coach Jim Harbaugh, and there was work to be done recruiting-wise. I spent the summer sending out and processing recruiting forms and evaluations and assisting with summer football camp.

In order to complete my degree at Kansas, I was required to do a semester-long internship. Growing up a Missouri Tigers fan, one of my professors, Dr. Bob Fredrick, thought it would be beneficial to complete my internship at the University of Missouri. When I met with the University of Missouri Athletics Director Mike Aldan, I expressed interest in working in both athletic development as well as athletic student-life. Mike allowed me to do just that. I spent the summer working in athletic development, and in the fall, moved into athletic student-life working with baseball, swimming and diving and women's tennis.

Working in athletic student-life was an amazing experience. I had the privilege of working with many student-athletes, and realize the struggles and pressures that are on these individuals not only to perform in the classroom, but also to perform on the playing field. Knowing that I wanted to pursue a career in athletic student-life, I was encouraged to go to the University of Oklahoma and work under Dr. Gerald Gurney, the senior associate athletics director of Athletic Student-Life at Oklahoma. The program was known around the country for its facilities and abundant resources that aided in the academic success of Oklahoma student-athletes. At the time, Oklahoma also had the largest athletic student-life budget in the country (Wolverton, 2008).

At Oklahoma, I was a graduate assistant in Athletic Student-Life. My responsibilities included writing and updating the student-athlete manual, assisting in continuing eligibility efforts, and helping put together various reports such as the Big 12 Conference All Academic selections. This experience provided me with an insight into the inner workings of big-time college sport. As graduation approached, I knew that there was still much that I needed to learn about college sport in America and that a PhD would be the best option to continue my education.

Before I had even arrived on the campus of the University of Tennessee, I had been given the opportunity to once again work in Athletic Student-Life. This time, however, I was asked to work with student-athletes with learning disabilities. As my first semester at Tennessee began and I mentored Tennessee student-athletes with learning disabilities, I was amazed at all the adversity these student-athletes had overcome. I saw their frustrations, their fears, and I knew that I wanted to do research that could potentially make a difference in the lives of these students-athletes. The sheer amount of student-athletes with learning disabilities was also of interest to me. Thus, when it came time to focusing on a research agenda and to select a topic of interest, I chose to study this sub-population of student-athletes.

My experience as an individual with a learning disability. Reading and math have always been difficult for me. There was always something "wrong." I would study for hours and still fail to perform well on my exams. It didn't make sense. I can watch a movie and have every single line memorized upon merely viewing it once. I can hear a song and boom…I can sing it to you. However, when it comes to reading a book and recalling what I read, I can't even tell you the name of the main character.

I was in first grade and my teacher's name was Miss Cord. I don't really remember much about her aside from the fact that she was really thin and had long brown hair. It was April, my class was sitting in a circle passing around a large hard cover book and each child was taking turns reading a page from the story before passing the book along to the next student. Suddenly, the book dropped into my lap. I froze, I gazed at the text on the large page, I tried to mumble the word, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't read. I remember all of the kids laughing at me, "Sarah, you can't even read," they said. I was so embarrassed. However, it was true, I couldn't read; even to this day I still have difficulty reading.

Twice a week I was taken out of class to go into a room with Ms. Kingston, the elementary school's reading specialist. I hated going to that classroom; I felt numb walking into the room which consisted of blue carpet, blue walls, and a large brown chalkboard. All of my friends got to stay in Miss Cord's class while I had to go to the room for the "special" kids; I must have been "stupid." For months, I begged my mom not to make me go see Ms. Kingston anymore. Although it felt like forever, eventually, my mom didn't make me go to the reading specialist anymore.

Although I was never the speed-reader my mom wanted me to be, things got a little better. Then, I headed off to middle school, and as the reading material became more difficult to read, I became increasingly frustrated. I'm in 7th grade in Mrs. Walsh's classroom. Every Tuesday, we would spend the class period silent reading. I would bring a book, but I never read it. I just sat there and by the end of the school year, I had every single poster on the wall memorized. One day Mrs. Walsh asked us to make an outline of a chapter in our history book. I'm sitting on my bedroom floor trying to read the chapter in the history book and develop an outline of the chapter. I must have been in my room for hours;

yet, the assignment had not been completed. My mom walked into my room to make sure I was alright; I was crying with about 10 sheets of notebook paper ripped up into tiny pieces and scattered all over the floor. “I can’t do it, Mom,” I said with tears rolling down my cheek. “Yes, you can, SarBear,” she told me. We went into her room, sprawled out on her bed and we finished the assignment.

In high school, subjects such as reading, English, math, and foreign language were challenging. I could not even read English, and I was expected to read in Spanish and French. During math class, I felt extreme anxiety; I did not understand the material and we often had pop quizzes and tests that only increased my despair. My sophomore year, after not performing well on the first few exams, I spoke to my teacher about strategies that would assist me in being more successful. From then on, they allowed me to take my test in the hallway where it was quiet and secluded. I was also given additional time to complete the exam.

My freshman year of English I spoke with my teacher about my difficulties, and I asked her to never call on me during class, and, specifically, not to make me read out loud. My mom would read the majority of my assigned reading aloud. We would then have conversations regarding the reading and she would help me complete my homework. My high school senior English teacher was unsympathetic with my situation. On several occasions, she referred to me in front of the class as “lazy,” “unmotivated,” and “stupid.” In reality, I was attempting to read and learn the material, but I had a difficult time comprehending the text. This particular teacher expressed to me that I was “nothing special” and that I would never go to college.

My mom, on several occasions, had attempted to get me tested for a learning disability. I was tested in elementary school for a learning disability; however, my test scores were just above what was needed to receive the diagnosis of "learning disability." Again, my mom tried to get me tested in middle school as well as high school. This time, there seemed to be the consensus among the school administration that because I was performing at or above my grade level and I earned above average grades that I did not need to be tested for a learning disability.

I went to college at the University of Kansas. It was a tough adjustment, but I did fine my first year. I didn't pick up a book (because it wouldn't have helped), so I had to rely on class lectures on PowerPoint slides and the notes that I took in class to get through. By now I had learned how to compensate for my deficiencies. I would often go meet with my teachers for additional help; in my communication class my sophomore year I actually had to have one of the graduate teaching assistants read me the exams so I could understand what the teacher was asking me. Despite the difficulty I had in college, I managed to graduate in three years.

I seemed to get through my master's relatively painlessly. However, the GRE is still one of the worst experiences of my life. I felt the testing environment for the GRE was extremely negative, the exam was administered on a computer, and to take matters worse the test was timed. The experience of taking the GRE increased in anxiety level. However, despite the GRE, I decided to come to Tennessee to get my doctorate in Sport Management. My first semester here was really difficult; not only was the transition tough, but the sheer amount of reading for the doctoral-level classes and having to read hundreds of scholarly articles really took its toll on me. I didn't think I was ever going to finish my course work.

My second semester at Tennessee I enrolled in Introduction to Qualitative Research. The required reading for that course was astronomical. I think we were reading around one to two books a week and there was supplemental reading online. I walked into class, I began to present an ethnography article that was assigned to me and everyone was just staring at me. Dr. Sallee stopped me, and explained what the article was about and seemed rather confused that my evaluation was so far off point. I had read the article, it took me three hours, but I read it, and once again I had no recollection of what I had read.

That night I went home. I was so embarrassed and frustrated. I called my mom; she told me to read out loud. When I was a little girl I would always have to read out loud. But now I was 23 and I didn't have time to read the sheer volume of reading I had to tackle out loud. So, I went online and searched places that offered private testing for learning disabilities. Most of the testing centers and private psychologists I considered were charging thousands of dollars to test for learning disabilities. Out of desperation, I e-mailed the KLASS center on campus. My e-mail read, "There is something missing, It's like the information cannot get from point A to point B." The next day I got an e-mail back saying that I could be tested for $100.

Two weeks later, I was in the Bailey Building explaining my ordeal. I went in for testing two consecutive Wednesdays for four hours. The testing consisted of timed fraction tables, essays, and I even sat in front of a computer pressing "enter" on the keyboard every time an "x" popped up on the screen. After the second week of testing was complete, I was told that my results would be available in two weeks. When the tests results revealed that I did, in fact, have a learning disability, I was relieved. Finally, there was an answer; finally,

after 18 years I know that it wasn't "just me" and I wasn't crazy. I was diagnosed with a reading disorder, a math disorder, anxiety disorder, and ADHD-Combined type.

I now qualify for accommodations. I am eligible to receive my reading material on tape so I can listen to my assignments; I also qualify for extended time. I cannot even express the difference that simple accommodation, such as the books that I receive in an alternative format, has made in my academic career and in lowering my anxiety.

Having a learning disability has taught me a lot about myself. I have an obligation to help those who are like me, the individuals who have learned to cope with their difficulties and were passed over for testing because in the eyes of the public school system, if a student earns average grades, apparently he or she is "learning." I want to help those who were told in first grade that they could not read, or that they would never graduate from college. People are really misinformed about what learning disabilities are. In reality, I learn differently. I don't learn effectively by reading a book, I learn best when I can listen to the information.

There are still days that I feel stupid, especially when I pull up a paper I've just written and can't even proof-read my own work. However, through this study, I know that I can make a difference. Sport is held in such a high esteem in our country and around the world. How amazing would it be to use sport to inform people about this disability, and to spread awareness about stereotyping those who have learning disabilities?

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was developed in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology to provide a greater understanding of "others," those individuals in primitive cultures who were viewed as unrefined (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Sense its inception in the 1920s, there

is increasing interest and senserity in qualitative research, and, as such, new forms of inquiry are continuously evolving (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Due to the constant progression of qualitative research, there are multiple variations (Creswell, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as a situated practice that transforms the world, consisting "of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Qualitative researchers "study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). The ability to dissect various worldviews and perspectives holds qualitative research together, allowing qualitative inquiry to change the world (Creswell, 2007). Simply put, Merrian (2009) illustrates qualitative research as "how people make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world" (p. 13).

Statistical analysis fails to answer all research problems (Creswell, 2007). Thus, with the appropriate research question, qualitative research can be a more effective method used to study certain groups (Creswell, 2007). Just as in qualitative research, beginning with assumptions and the use of a theoretical lens, qualitative researchers inquire into the importance of individuals or groups attributing to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research permits deep questioning regarding the basic assumptions of the human race and the world in which we reside (Creswell, 2007). Populations, individuals, and groups can be studied using qualitative inquiry, ultimately allowing researchers to engage with individuals directly (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is useful when the investigator is attempting to gather data regarding the values, motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of particular individuals or groups (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Perhaps one of the biggest advantages to qualitative research is the

ability to gain contextual information regarding an individual or group's experience surrounding the research topic (Mack et al., 2005). Often, qualitative inquiry reveals the impact of various identities that may not have been apparent such as race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status (Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative research can provide a greater understanding of the situation (Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative research can be used to evaluate issues of an understudied group, fill a gap in the literature, and evoke the thought process (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) concluded that there are several common characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative data is not collected in a closed setting, but rather in a natural setting in which the participant experiences the problem (Creswell, 2007). The researcher plays an important role in qualitative procedures, and, is, in fact, the instrument (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative studies, multiple sources of data (i.e. interviews, documents, observations) can be utilized to create a fuller picture of the problem (Creswell, 2007). Multiple data sources are common, but Hatch (2002) argues that the use of multiple data sources is not necessary. In this type of inquiry, researchers participate in inductive data analysis, building patterns, and dividing the data into categories and themes (Creswell, 2007). The focus is on the participant's perspectives and lived experience (Creswell, 2007). Often in qualitative studies, the researcher approaches the study through a theoretical lens and infers what is seen, heard, and perceived (Creswell, 2007). The theoretical framework that was used in this study is Stereotype Threat Theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Researchers embrace and believe in different realities; thus, the researcher should be aware of his or her ontology in order to properly express the unique perspectives of his or her participants (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is not conducted in a lab, but

most likely in the social world of the participant. Thus, by being in the participant's social world, the interviewer can become close to the participant, providing the study with an important context (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the choice for a researcher to conduct qualitative research also involves fleshing out his or her ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Creswell, 2007).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interview methodology. Semi-structured interviews guide the researcher in focusing on certain themes, and, as such, there are many advantages to this methodology (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Through the use of open-ended questions, I used semi-structured interviews "to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena; it will still have sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 124). Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to develop my questions before I interview participants, ensuring that the interview is focused and time is managed effectively (Patton, 2002). By ensuring that participants are asked the same questions in the same order, it will also assist in the data analysis process by making the responses easy to locate and compare (Patton, 2002).

In order for the semi-structured interview to be conducted properly, the interviewer should be an active listener and abstain from speaking habitually (Creswell, 2007; Leech, 2002). Semi-structured interviews cannot only be used to uncover themes, but can also assist in explorative and hypothesis testing purposes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher can gain a true and accurate representation of the participant (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Most importantly, semi-

structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into particular information relating to a particular topic or theory (Flick, 1998). The participant has the ability to expand on his or her answers, allowing for the researcher to dig deeper into the perceptions of the participant (Flick, 1998).

Variables such as race, class, ethnicity, and gender can also influence semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Densin, 2001). In fact, the gender, age, and ethnicity of the researcher can detour participants from divulging information and being completely open (Denscombe, 2007). The behavior of the participant may deviate depending on how the participant views the interviewer (Denscombe, 2007). The gender of the interviewer as well as the gender of the respondents can make a difference (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Although it depends on the social class, age, and ethnicity of the man, some men are used to having power or being in control (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002). For my study, I interviewed male African Americans as well as Caucasian male student-athletes. As a researcher I strived to be aware of how my participants perceived me, and how I treated my participants. In society, some women are seen to have expressive roles, whereas men are viewed as having instrumental roles (Pascoe, 2007). Some women are viewed as the caretakers of the family (Pascos, 2007). In turn, some men constantly strive to heighten and strengthen their masculinity in order to further separate themselves from some women (Coakley, 2009; Pascoe, 2007). Patton (2002) reminds qualitative researchers that "the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341). This once again points to the fact that I was the instrument in my study. As the instrument, I have preconceived notions and bias; by realizing my bias and recognizing my positionality, I can bracket them out of my study.

Procedure

Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Tennessee, an initial e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and seeking participation was sent to athletic academic advisers at 25 NCAA Division I-FBS institutions (see Appendix B). Purposeful sampling was used to attract possible participants. Based on the connections I had in athletic academic support, FBS institutions were contacted and asked if their student-athletes meeting the criteria would be interested in participating in the study**.** The e-mails were dispersed over a two-week period at the beginning of December. Athletic academic advisors who agreed to participate in the study were then asked to forward an e-mail along to those student-athletes who met the qualifications for participation. Four institutions responded and sent the e-mail along to the student-athletes who met the qualifications for the study. One institution responded that they did not want to participate in the study. Twenty institutions did not respond to my e-mail seeking participants. Of the four schools that agreed to participate, one institution allowed me to come to their campus and conduct face-to-face interviews with the student-athletes who agreed to participate in the study. With the student-athletes' consent, the athletic academic advisors scheduled the in-person interviews.

Nine Division I FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD were interviewed. The FBS institution was in a BCS conference, and has experienced winning within the past few seasons. The interviews took place during the off-season, specifically, at the end of January during the second week of the spring semester. The athletic academic support staff identified the student-athletes who met the criteria for this study, and scheduled all of the interviews. Prior to the interviews being conducted, the

academic support staff, which assisted in scheduling the interviews, signed a confidentiality statement, agreeing to keep any aspect of the study including the identities of the student-athletes who were participating confidential (See Appendix B).

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a secluded environment, which consisted of a large room with a table in the back of the athletic academic support center. The interviews were conducted over a two-day period. Eight in-person interviews were conducted on the first day, and one interview was conducted on the second day. Due to the fact that the interviews took place when the student-athletes were scheduled to meet with their learning specialist, the athletic academic support staff asked me to limit the interviews to 30 minutes. Thus, the student-athletes met with their learning specialist for 30 minutes, and then met with me for 30 minutes. As such, the length of the interviews raged from 11 minutes, 45 seconds to 37 minutes, 34 seconds. The average interview time was 17 minutes. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the student-athletes were asked to read the informed consent statement. I also verbally explained the purpose of the study, and informed the participants they could discontinue participation anytime without penalty. Each student-athlete signed the informed consent statement, and was given an additional copy of the informed consent statement for his records (See Appendix A). Furthermore, each participant granted me permission to digitally record his interview. To protect the identity of the participants, the participants were also asked to select pseudonym.

Participants

The participants for this study were nine NCAA Division I FBS student-athletes who had been diagnosed with a learning disabilities and/or ADHD.

Although African American males tend to be overrepresented in special education classrooms throughout primary and secondary education (Talbott et al., 2011; Shifer et al., 2011), there is little evidence that African Americans are overrepresented once they arrive on a college campus. In fact, it appears what Caucasian males are being over identified with learning disabilities as well as ADHD in higher education (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Statistics, 2000). For this study, I focused on male football student-athletes because males are three times more likely to get diagnosed with a learning disability then females (Lerner & Johns, 2012).

FBS student-athletes were interviewed for several reasons. The breakdown of African American student-athletes (47.4%) to Caucasian student-athletes (43%) participating in NCAA Division I FBS football is nearly proportionate (Irich, 2010). Therefore, I expected to interview a representative sample African American and Caucasian participants. Secondly, there is evidence that student-athletes outside of Division I FBS are not getting diagnosed with learning disabilities upon entering higher education (NCAA, 2009b). An NCAA (2009b) investigation found a statistically significant difference between the number of student athletes in Division I FBS that were being screened for learning disabilities when compared to athletes in Division I FCS. Furthermore, there is a large difference between FBS and FCS institutions regarding amount of financial investment in academic support programs for student-athletes (NCAA, 2009b). FBS institutions spend an average of $655,098 on academic support, whereas FCS institutions spend $154,980 (NCAA, 2009b).

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed, allowing for the subsequent analysis of meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although originally a transcriptionist was going to be utilized, I listened and transcribed each interview. Each unit of data was assigned its own distinctive code (Saldana, 2009). Coding was natural which allowed for patterns to occur in the data, and also deliberate because my primary goal was to find patterns in the data (Saldana, 2009). During the initial phase of coding, in vivo coding, emotion coding, and values coding was used.

In vivo coding. *In vivo coding* is useful in an educational environment and places priority on understanding the culture or worldview of the participant (Saldana, 2009; Stringer, 1990). In vivo coding allowed me to code the transcript utilizing the actual words of the participant (Stringer, 1990). Using the specific words spoken by the participant can assist the researcher in grasping and uncovering significant data (Chaimaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009).

Emotion coding. I also used *emotion coding* (Goleman, 1995; Prus, 1996, Saldana, 2009). Emotion coding is acceptable for nearly all qualitative inquiries, specifically when the study involves the participants' experiences and actions (Saldana, 2009). Emotions are an important part of the human experience, and, as such, emotional coding provides the researcher with a deeper insight into the worldview of the participant's perspectives (Saldana, 2009). All emotions experienced by the participants are labeled (Goleman, 1995; Saldana, 2009). For the purposes of emotional coding, an emotion is defined as " a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act" (Goleman, 1995, p. 298). When utilizing emotion coding, it was important to

remember that variations is a single emotion (Doddert & Kurth-Schai, 1992; Saldana, 2009).

Values coding. *Values coding* uses the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs to capture their worldview perspectives (Gable & Wolf, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Saldana, 2009). The researcher's epistemology as well as values can greatly impact how the study is coded in regards to values coding (Saldana, 2009). Ultimately, values coding reflects the needs and wants of the participant (Saldana, 2009).

The second cycle of coding consisted of rethinking the initial coding efforts to allow the researcher categorize the data into themes (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding and theoretical coding were used throughout the second cycle of coding. Pattern coding pulls together meaningful data and groups, sorting in into smaller themes and constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Ultimately, this type of coding allowed the researcher to search for causes and explanations in the data and assist in developing major themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Theoretical coding revolves around the central theme of the study, and analyzes the words that appear to explain the theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Saldana, 2009).

Because I am interested in the experience of student-athletes with learning disabilities, their emotions, culture and viewpoint, as well as values are a vital part to their experience. Coding the data and looking for those particular elements, allowed me to more efficiently analyze the transcripts and use certain coding techniques to developing major themes.

Trustworthiness

Ultimately, the quality of a qualitative study derives from the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the researcher (Amis & Silk, 2008). A well-conducted qualitative study is valid, trustworthy, and objective (Amis & Silk, 2008). Several strategies were utilized to assist in the trustworthiness of this study.

Bracketing interview. Prior to finalizing my research questions, I took part in a bracketing interview, conducted by an experienced qualitative researcher, which allowed me to recognize my biases. In qualitative research, I am the instrument. Revealing my bias and explaining my bias will provide a sense of understanding as to the intentions behind the study as well as the conclusions of the study (Merriam, 2009). The bracketing interview allowed me to realize that I was not a student-athlete, and as such, I do not truly understand what these men are going through because I do not share the same particular experiences. Similarly, the bracketing interview also reinforced the fact that I am a female, and as such, have not had the same experiences as males. Furthermore, the bracketing interview made me realize that although I have worked in college athletics, and I have a learning disability, that due to the fact I have come from a life of privilege that I will not have the same experiences as my participants.

Pilot study. To test my research questions, a pilot study was conducted with former NCAA Division I student-athletes who had been diagnosed with a learning disability. The pilot study allowed me to see what questions appeared to resonate with the participant, and what questions needed to be added to my interview protocol in order to fully understand the experience of my participants. The pilot study was conducted over the phone, and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The pilot study provided me with feedback,

which in turn caused me to add questions to the interview protocol. Demographic questions as well as questions regarding the student-athletes' involvement in the athletic academic center were added as a result of the pilot study.

Research group. To assist in removing my bias, a research group was utilized to assist me in finalizing the themes. The research group consisted of one master's and three doctoral students who have a background in qualitative research, as well as the member of my dissertation committee who oversaw the research methods for this study. Each member of the research group signed a confidentiality agreement, pledging not to reveal any of the details from the transcripts (see Appendix B). The interviews were sent electronically to the members of the research group. Each member coded each transcript individually for meaning. The, as a group, we met one time for two hours to discuss the transcripts and the themes that emerged. I also met with the methods committee member to finalize the themes.

Member checks. To assist in establishing trustworthiness, member checks, in which I ask the participant about surfacing themes were also used (Merriam, 2009). Member checks are the best way to identify my own bias, and, in essence, reducing bias by providing me a fuller understanding of what I have truly observed (Maxwell, 2005). Upon the completion of transcribing all nine interviews, the participants were e-mailed a copy of their interview transcript. This allowed participants to review, revise, and expand upon their answers. Furthermore, the participants were also e-mailed the themes to see if they believed the themes accurately portrayed their experience in higher education. Although the interviews and themes were e-mailed to the participants, the participants did not contact me with any changes.

Generalizability

The purpose of this study was not to generalize, but rather to learn from the individual experiences of the participant. Creswell (2009) makes the argument that qualitative research cannot be generalized. Every situation is unique, and, as such, cannot be used to make assumptions about other circumstances (Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I hope that by learning from the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and ADHD that applicable changes can be made to the situations they are being placed in. The experiences of the student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD can therefore be enhanced.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS student-athletes who had been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. Nine football student-athletes at a Division I FBS institution with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD were interviewed. The interviews took place at the end of January during the second week of the spring semester. The athletic academic support staff identified the student-athletes who met the criteria for this study, and scheduled all of the interviews. The academic support staff members who assisted in scheduling the interviews were asked to sign a confidentiality statement, agreeing to keep any aspect of the study including the identities of the student-athletes who were participating confidential. The interviews were conducted in a secluded environment, which consisted of a large room with table in the back of the athletic academic support center. The interviews were conducted over a two-day period. Eight in-person interviews were conducted on day one, and one interview was conducted on day two. The athletic academic support staff asked me to limit the interviews to 30 minutes due to the fact that the interviews took place during the hour when the student-athletes were scheduled to meet with their learning specialist. Thus, the student-athletes met with their learning specialist for 30 minutes, and then met with me for 30 minutes. As such, the length of the interviews ranged from 11 minutes, 45 seconds to 37 minutes, 34 seconds. The average interview time was 17 minutes. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the student-athletes were asked to read the informed consent statement. I also verbally explained the purpose of the study, and informed the participants they could discontinue participation anytime without penalty. Each student-athlete signed the

informed consent statement, and was given an additional copy of the informed consent statement for his records. Furthermore, each participant granted me permission to digitally record his interview.

Demographics

Of the nine student-athletes that were interviewed, four were freshman, four were sophomores, and one was a senior. The average age of the participants was 19.66-years old. The student-athletes were asked to self-identify their race or ethnicity: two student-athletes self-identified as African American, three student-athletes self-identified as Black, one student-athlete identified as Black American, one student-athlete self-identified as mixed, and two student-athletes self-identified as Caucasian. Seven student-athletes reported that they were from urban cities, while two student-athletes reported that they grew up in rural towns. Six of the participants were from a large southwestern state a history of football dominance, two participants were from a state in the south, and one participant was from a state in the Midwest. Seven student-athletes reported that they grew up in a non-traditional home. Four of the student-athletes were raised by single mothers, one student-athlete explained that he was raised by his grandmother and then his father, one student-athlete was raised by his grandparents, one had parents who were divorced, and the two student-athletes who self-identified as Caucasian reported that they had been raised by both parents. The majority of the student-athletes, five specifically, played on defense, while three student-athletes played offense, and one student-athlete played on special teams. Three of the student-athletes informed me that they were starters on the football team. When asked about their major choice, two student-athletes reported that they were communications majors, two said they were general studies majors, while

the other student-athletes' majors were sports management, physical education, secondary education, and pre-business. One student-athlete revealed that he was undecided as to his major. (see Table 1)

Due to the fact that all student-athletes at this institution were screened for learning disabilities and/or ADHD upon entering higher education, this institution did not accept previous diagnosis of learning disabilities and/or ADHD. If the student-athletes screener indicated that he might have a learning disability and/or ADHD, he was sent to a psychologist who ultimately decided if the student-athlete was a suitable candidate to be diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. Therefore, although four of the participants revealed that they were diagnosed with learning disability and/or ADHD in either primary or secondary education, the diagnosis had to be re-verified once the student-athletes arrived on campus.

Themes

Three major themes appeared throughout the data analysis. Each theme was comprised of various sub-themes. The first major theme that appeared was the *impact of football*, which refers to the influence that the game of football has had on the experiences of the participants. The second theme that appeared consistently throughout the data was *learning competence*, which refers to the participants' belief that he was capable and willing to learn. The third and final theme that appeared in the data was *stereotypes*, in which many of the participants described instances where they were singled-out, judged, or made fun of because of their appearance, learning disability, or because they were a student-athlete. (see Figure 1).

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Year	Race*	Major	Hometown	Family Structure*	Transfer Student	Position	Starter	Diagnosis*
Dewayne	19	Freshman	African American	Communication	Urban	Dad/Grandma	No	Defense	No	Didn't Know
Xio	19	Freshman	Black	Undecided	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	ADHD
Jeremy	19	Freshman	Black American	Sports Management	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	Didn't Know
Roger	22	Senior	Black	General Studies	Urban	Divorced Parents	Yes	Defense	Yes	Didn't Know
Michael	21	Sophomore	African-American	Physical Education	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	Didn't Know
Tim	19	Sophomore	Mixed	General Studies	Rural	Grandparents	No	Offense	No	Learning Disability
Storm	19	Freshman	Black	Secondary Education	Rural	Mom	No	Offense	No	Didn't Know
Thomas	19	Sophomore	White	Communication	Urban	Mom & Dad	No	Special Teams	Yes	ADD
Ron	20	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	Pre-Business	Urban	Mom & Dad	No	Offense	Yes	Dyslexia

* Student-Athletes self-identified

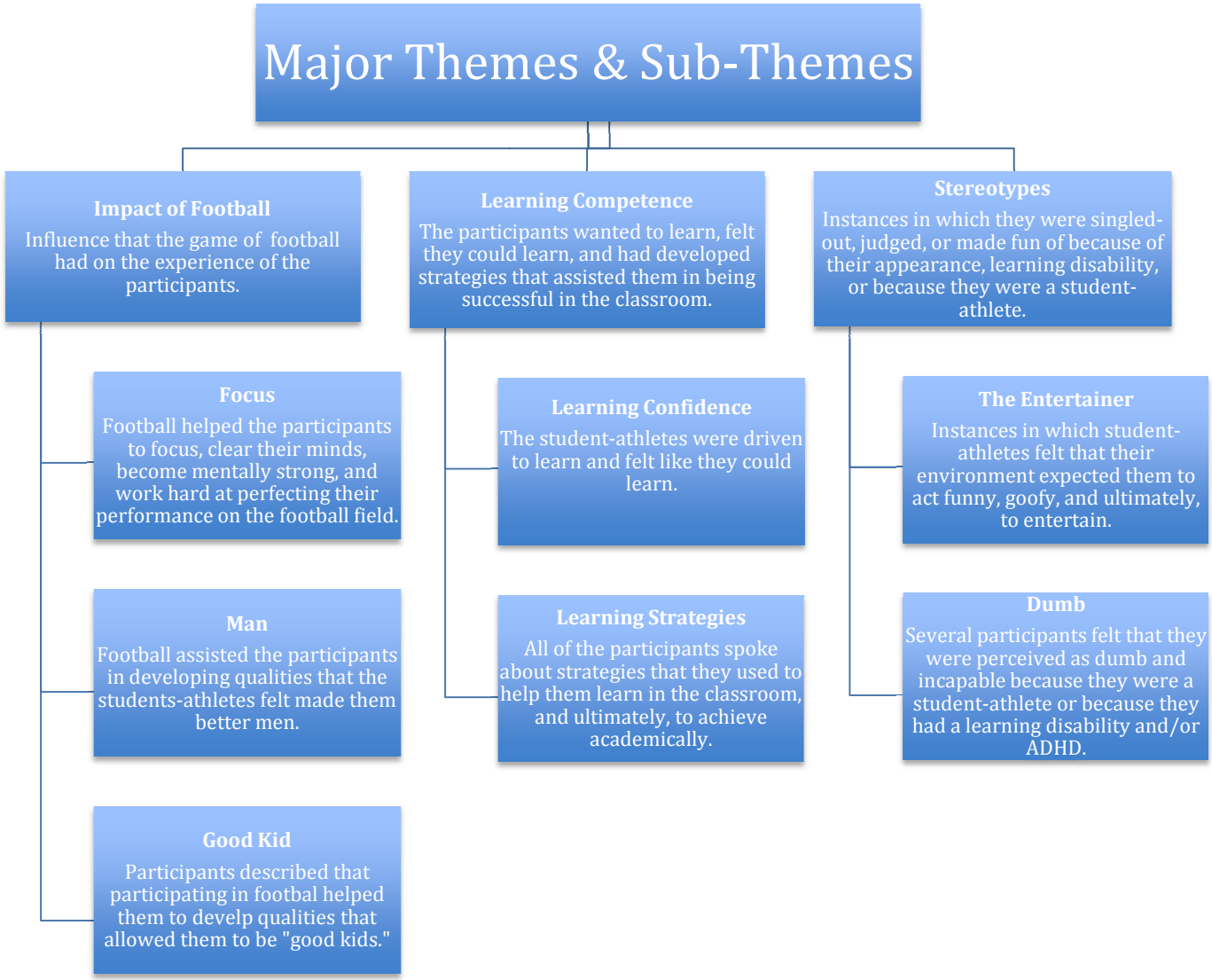

Figure 1 *Major Themes and Sub-Themes*

The Impact of Football

The student-athletes revealed they began playing football for various reasons. Ron explained that he started playing football because of his size: "I was just big, bigger than everyone." Another participant, Thomas, expressed that his interest in football began "because all (his) friends did it." Xio expressed that he had loved football sense he was three, "I just love football. I just picked up the ball and started playing." Dewayne, Jeremy, Michael, and Tim explained to me that their family members, such as brothers and cousins, encouraged them to play football. It was apparent that football had a significant impact on the experiences of these nine student-athletes. Three sub-themes were revealed in the data: a) focus, b) the notion that football develops student-athletes into a "man", and c) football allowed these student-athletes to be a "good kid".

Focus. The student-athletes who were interviewed take football seriously, and described in their dialogue that football has helped them to focus, clear their minds, become mentally strong, and work hard at perfecting their performance on the football field. Dewayne explained to me that, "When you playing football everything just leaves, you can focus on one thing rather than everything else that is going on in your life." He also felt that football allowed him to be a more productive learner:

> I feel like I'm a better learner with football I don't know why. I can learn stuff faster with football and with school, like, I need to put more focus on school sometimes. I think I need to do to learn more and do better in school.

Jeremy enjoyed the physical nature of the game of football, saying, "It's a physical game too like, say you got stuff on your mind you can take it out on the field." Playing football also allowed Jeremy to get strong and learn how to out-think his opponents. On the

field, football allowed Jeremy to clear his mind, but when in the classroom, he felt that he needed to "be focused more and pay attention."

Xio described college football as, "Everything you do, you do it fast, you can't just take a break. You're just constantly moving, you just gotta be mentally strong." Xio believed that football has helped him to "become stronger" and allowed him to "see a vision." He described himself as "pretty good at football" and enjoys "hittin' people." However admitted that he loved football, and if not for football he probably wouldn't be in college.

Roger enjoys the game of football, and believed that football has helped him to "find out how everything is, going through workouts and training, just seeing what you can push yourself though." Although Roger liked the social aspect of school as well as the environment, he told me, "I don't like to do work." In fact, he distracts himself so that he can to "everything but work." However, he takes football, or his "job," as he described it, very seriously.

Football has allowed Michael to focus because if he is having a bad day, football can serve as an outlet for his aggression. When I asked Michael if he liked school, he replied, "No, I do not like school. School's just boring to me, I've never liked school. Like, I wish I could just play football all day. School has just never been my type of thing, but I gotta do it." Michael told me that, "In high school it's really easy, but in college you really got to put your time into it. Like, study all day and studying is really not for me." However, Michael cares about football, saying that his coaches would describe him as a "hard worker" that "does not give up." In football, Michel has learned how to deal with adversity; he faced several athletic-related injuries, but realized that you have to pick yourself up and "get back

out there." In football, Michael works hard and has persevered, but in the classroom, he is uninterested.

Tim says participating in football has taught him to "know his assignment and like stick to it." He used metaphors comparing his football team to his family, "team sport, you can bond with somebody like um…you sweat together you work hard together, you play for each other. It's like a family, you become like a family." On the field, Tim enjoyed hitting people, and expresses his dedication to his position, and his "family"; however, off the field Tim admits that he "Could do more, I don't put extra work into school like I do with football…like I should." Tim is the first in his family to have the opportunity to go to college and he told me, "I feel like I have to." School is challenging for Tim. He said, "I mean, I make it challenging cause I'm kinda lazy sometimes. With the learning disorder, it gets me off. Like, I get focused on a certain thing and then it's brain fart pretty much." Tim told me that he has a learning disability, and due to his condition, he takes the medication Concerta. He explained that when he took Concerta:

> It slows me down, it slows me down, like I feel, like that's why I don't take it anymore. Like I take it, but I don't take it all the time like I used to. It makes me not want to eat, it really doesn't help me pay attention because it slows me down so much. I just be like high, pretty much.

Tim finds it difficult to focus on school; however, when it comes to football he said, "It taught me how to work hard, like I know I'm lazy, but then again I'm not."

Thomas enjoys football because it has allowed him to work out and he enjoys hanging out with his teammates. When I asked him how football had influenced his life, he explained, "I dunno, I guess to do my best in everything. I really don't do that with school

though." When I asked why, Thomas responded "I'm not interested, I guess, I only give 100% on stuff that I like to do." Thomas was diagnosed with ADD and has a difficult time focusing. In order to assist him in focusing, his doctor proscribed him Vyvanse, a common medication used to decrease the symptoms of ADD. Thomas believed that his medication does help to focus; he said, "My medication, like when I tate it, it makes me study and stuff." Although the drug is supposed to assist Thomas with focusing on his schoolwork, he told me that because of the drug, he does not eat. In his particular situation, Thomas chose not to take medication that could potentially assist him in focusing in school because it would impact his ability to perform on the football field. Essentially, because taking the medication does not allow him to eat, Thomas would lose weight, and potentially muscle, which would impact his ability to successfully participate in football.

The student-athletes I interviewed expressed their love for football, and several participants informed me that when playing football they could focus. Furthermore, not only could they focus when they played football, but most of the student-athletes reported that they worked hard at perfecting the skills necessary to be successful at football. However, it appeared throughout the data that the focus that assisted in their football success did not carry over into the classroom. Although the student-athletes reported that they enjoyed school, they did not have the same focus in the classroom as they did on the football field.

Along with focus, all nine of the participants spoke to the fact that football requires a large amount of time. Even during the time of the interviews, in the midst of the off-season, the participants found themselves with a full schedule dictated by football. Many participants not only had workouts, but also had obligations in the weight room and the

training room where treatments were taking place to help recover as well as prepare these student-athletes' bodies for next season. This was the case when Xio described his typical day:

> I got up at 5:25 cause we had workouts at 6:15 so I had to get up at 5:25. Go work out, after workouts I gotta rush to class, I got a 9:05, then I gotta walk up here to tutoring. After tutoring I got an 11:15 class, then after that, I dunno, I get a bite to eat. Then I go to the training room so I can recover and get ready for training the next day.

Both Roger and Jeremy explained that waking up for football was a challenge: "Really, waking up in the morning is a challenge," Jeremy described, "I used to wake up late, but now my roommate wake me up."

Ron described the time commitment that football required, and how tired he is at the end of the day:

> Ah, it does put a big strain on time, just because we are up here a lot. Doing plays or drills or practice or lift. So, you have to know when stuff is due and get it done. It's very, physically demanding. I mean, our strength coach is awesome, knows what he's doing and wants 100%, well 110%. By the end of the workout, you're just spent and you want to go to sleep, but you know you have to get your classwork done too.

Like many other participants, Thomas found it difficult "Just fitting everything in with like sports." So although football provided some of these student-athletes with an immense amount of focus, due to the time demands of football, aside from football the participants were left with little time to focus on much outside of their sport.

Being a man. For most of the participants in this study, football is not only an activity in which they can focus, but also participating in football has helped some of these student-athletes stay out of trouble and develop qualities such as leadership that they believe have made them better men. Xio said:

> It just makes me become a man. It ain't just all about football, they help me. I didn't have a father, so they help me. It's like a whole bunch of father figures around me to umm…it just gets me stronger and helps me to see a vision cause I want to go to the NFL so I can take care of my mamma now. So, that's what I'm doing.

Xio goes further by explaining that his coaches want him to be a man:

> I mean it kinda go both ways cause they talk down on you and then they talk good on you. It's all to get you better. 'Cause they told me to be a dominant player, they want me to be a man on the field. I gotta step up and be a leader and be a man on the field.

When I asked Xio if being a man was important to him, he responded, "Yes, 'cause, I feel like, 'cause my mamma she struggle to raise us. I feel like I can't let that happen to my kid, not having a father, so I gotta be a man." Xio feels that football has taught him to be a man, and feels that because of football, his friends as well as his coaches view him as a leader.

Other participants such as Dewayne believed that participating in football kept him out of trouble. In addition, because of football he tried not to get in trouble. According to Michael, playing football also "made me get out of trouble a lot." In fact, the prospect of participating in football at the college level encouraged Michael not only to get out of trouble, but also to stay out of trouble. Michael explained, "Once people started telling me, I'm athletic enough to go to college, they told me I needed to stay out of trouble. So, I stayed

out of trouble and I got here." Although Michael stayed out of trouble because of football, he also enjoys playing football because he can hit people and "not get in trouble for it."

Storm described himself as a "well-mannered young man." He believed he is respectful, and a "well-going guy." Storm felt that because he played football he is a role model to those around him. "I'm good to be around," Storm said, "I don't cause a lot of trouble."

Jeremy explained that football allowed him to be different and provided him the opportunity to better himself. He described himself as a "respectful, brave, and okay kid, I stayed out of trouble." Jeremy went on to say "I'd be different from people." When I asked him what he meant by being different he replied, "Like, where I'm from, I try to be different, I try to do better." When I proceeded to ask Jeremy what the people where like where he came from, he described them as "ghetto…ghetto people." For Jeremy, he saw football as something positive that separated him from others. Football is what made Jeremy different, and because he played football he felt that his friends looked up to him and expected him to set a good example.

Ron felt that playing football had greatly influenced his life.

> It's taught me um, perseverance, time management, it kinda of just giving it your all no matter what. You learn that there are bigger things out there than yourself. In workouts here, it's kinda all team-oriented. So, if you don't do something right, or if you don't finish a drill, your whole line will do punishment with you to reinforce that team bonding. It, respect it's taught me. And, um…something might seem daunting, but if you keep going, little by little bit, you can get it done.

Ron described himself as a "hard worker, a leader;" however, he explained that he still wanted to grow in both areas. Furthermore, Ron expressed his desire to inspire his teammates and to increase their passion and commitment to both the game as well as the team. In essence, football not only assisted Ron in becoming a better man, but the game has also encouraged him to be a leader to his teammates.

Good kid. Football helped many of the participants develop into a "good kids." Storm explains that being a good person is why he was recruited to play football at his particular institution. "I'm a good person," Storm stated, "…a good athlete, a good football player, it's what I came here for. I'm a good influence on a lot of people. I set good examples." Like many other participants, Tim also credits football for developing him into a better person. Referring to football, Tim stated, "It makes be a better person. I don't taking nothing for granted." Jeremy stated that although his coaches push him hard, "They make me do better than I do."

Dewayne said, "I guess I could say I'm a good kid, at times. I never did nothing bad, so I guess that's good." According to Dewayne, something bad is classified as "like prison, something like that, or going to jail. Stealing of anything." Furthermore, to Dewayne it was important for his coaches to perceive him as a good kid, and he believed that his coaches thought of him as a good kid.

Michael explained that when he was growing up, he was a bad kid. "I used to get into fights, like almost every day, so like I got suspended" Michael said. "I really didn't care about being suspended. I like being suspended, I got to go home." Ultimately, it was the prospect of playing football at the next level that convinced Michael that he could no longer be a bad kid.

According to Roger, football impacted him life by making him a better person:

> I guess…I guess it influence me by becoming a better person. Like find out how everything is, going through workouts and training, just seeing what you can push yourself through, make you a better person. Going through up and downs in sports, it makes you a better person.

Football pushes Roger to be better, and challenges him to be more consistent. "To be great, you got to be consistently good," Roger stated. The adversity that an athlete can face through sport participation can lead to an increased character, as was the case with Roger.

Ron believes his teachers would say that he is "engaged" and a "good kid." Being a good kid was important to Ron. He especially strived to please the significant others in his life such as his parents, teachers, and coaches. When I asked Rob if being a good kid was important to him, he responded saying,

> Ah, yeah, I mean my parents, it's funny 'cause, other parents that I talk to are like a "C is good," but if I get like an 89 one point away from a B, they're like, "What's up with the B." And so, it's always just striving to be excellent in academics.

To Ron, being a good kid goes beyond the game of football and into the classroom as well as meeting the expectations set forth by his parents. It is an expectation that Ron hoped to achieve.

Ultimately, it was football that the participants credited for teaching them how to focus and develop the skills necessary to allow them to become men and better people. It is clear from the data that football has had a tremendous impact on the experiences of the participants. It also appeared that football contributed positively to many of these student-athletes by developing them into men and better people.

Learning Competence

Only three of the nine student-athletes interviewed could definitively tell me what their diagnosis was regarding their learning disability. These participants had also been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD prior to entering higher education, and thus were more familiar with having a learning disability and/or ADHD. One participant said he was dyslexic, one said he had ADD, and the other informed me that he had ADHD. Five of the participants did not know what their learning disability was, and one participant stated that his diagnosis was a learning disability. Despite many of the participants not being aware of what their particular diagnosis was, it was clear in the data that the participants wanted to learn, felt they could learn, and had developed strategies that assisted them in being successful in the classroom. As such, learning competence was the second major theme that appeared throughout the data. Two sub-themes emerged: confidence in learning, and learning strategies that the student-athletes used to assist them throughout their academic endeavors.

Confidence in learning. Despite the fact that the participants had diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD, it was clear that they did not allow their disability to deter them from learning. Some participants even used their disability to motivate them to achieve academically. Although some of the participants did not enjoy school, and for most of the participants learning in the classroom was difficult, the majority of the student-athletes I spoke with were driven to learn.

For Dewayne, learning the game of football has been easier than learning in the classroom. “I feel like I’m a better learner with football I don’t know why,” Dewayne explained, “I can learn stuff faster with football than with school.” Although the pace of

football in college was faster than the game was in high school, he felt confident in his ability to learn the plays:

> I mean pretty much just trying to learn the plays, I mean they are a lot harder than high school. I mean but, I'm picking it up fast. I feel like I pick up football a lot faster than school at times.

Despite the fact that Dewayne felt that football provided a greater venue in which to learn, Dewayne liked school because he enjoyed "learning fast" and learning about "new things." Furthermore, although Dewayne expressed that he wished he could be smarter, ultimately he felt that he just had to "push through." Dewayne has a strong desire to learn. "I mean I want to learn the answer, but it takes time to learn it," Dewayne stated. Thus, despite Dewayne's love for football, he also desires academic success.

Xio said, "I ain't that smart. I mean, I'm smart, but I ain't that smart." Xio had ADHD and because of his diagnosis explained to me that he had a difficult time sitting still. "I do move around a lot. I just can't stay still," Xio explained. "Like if I'm just sitting there, I just start rockin', it's just my nerves, I donno. I just gotta do something." Although Xio had ADHD, he said "I ain't ashamed of it. It ain't no big deal cause I know I can learn. I know what to do and what not to do." Thus, despite having a learning disability, Xio was confident in his ability to learn. "I'm confident in myself," Xio exclaimed, "I mean I got ADHD, that ain't nothing.

Jeremy expressed that learning really wasn't hard for him and he did admit that he had to work hard academically throughout high school. Although after he was diagnosed with a learning disability it did make him think differently about himself. "It make me feel

different," Jeremy said, "because I think I can do it, I just gotta work harder." Thus, despite having a learning disability, Jeremy felt that he could succeed in the classroom.

Tim loves football, and puts forth more effort into football then he does his academic work. "It's something I love to do," Tim explained, "if I loved school I would probably do the same thing, but I don't love school." Learning had always been a difficult for Tim. Although Tim claimed that he was not ashamed of his learning disability, he felt that his learning disability differentiated him from his peers. "I feel like I can't do as much as a normal student does," Tim explained. Still, despite his difficulty in the classroom, Tim feels that he can excel. "When I was told I had a learning disability, I think I just felt sorry for myself," Tim said, "but I tell myself that I can do it."

Thomas believed that school was hard, and invested much of his energy into football, "I guess I do my best with everything," Thomas said, "I just really don't do that with school." Thomas found it difficult to fit his busy school schedule in with his sport obligations. School is not an interest to Thomas, "I'm not interested, I only go 100% on stuff I like to do." Still, Thomas did realize that he was capable of succeeding in the classroom, but he needed to put fourth effort in order to achieve success.

Although Ron is dyslexic, he had learned how to overcome the obstacles that he faced. "I knew I wasn't not smart," Ron said. Due to his diagnosis, Ron still does not like taking certain classes, like reading or English; however, he did not let his diagnosis get in the way of his academic success. Ron used his experience as an individual with dyslexia to inspire others who maybe facing a similar situation:

> Public service announcement: that it doesn't matter what other people think of you. If you have a learning disability you can push through it, and I mean, there are

> success stories everywhere. I mean Einstein is dyslexic, Tom Cruise is dyslexic and he's a successful actor, read all the time. It's kind of like knowing that there are people out there with the same thing as me who have done, I mean one is mathematics and one is acting. So, it's just, almost inspiring. I'm not going to say that they are my role models, but knowing that there are people out there who have over came it, um, means that I could do it to type of thing.

Ron refused to let his disability define him. "I am who I am," Ron stated, "I know I can change somethings, but I'm pretty happy with what I am." Thus, Ron has strived to used his disability to set a positive example.

Overall, despite the fact that these participants played football at a major Division I university and were diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD, most still wanted to learn and felt they were capable of learning if they put in the effort. Interestingly enough, despite the participants' desire and willingness to learn, what some of the participants could learn was dictated by football. Several of the participants I interviewed had to pick their major because of their football schedule. Dewayne wanted to major in criminal justice; however, the institution that is essentially paying for his school does not offer a degree in criminal justice, so he is majoring in broadcasting. Tim expressed his interest in coaching; however, the school does not offer a degree in coaching education, so he had to choose a different major. Thomas expressed interest in majoring in business, but because of time constraints due to football and the difficulty of the business classes, he switched his major to communications. Ron loves math and problem-solving; however, engineering classes conflicted with practice time. As such, Ron forced to major in business. So once

again, although the students had the desire to learn, the opportunities to learn certain disciplines were limited because of their sport.

Learning Strategies. All of the participants spoke about strategies that they used to help them learn in the classroom, and ultimately, to achieve academically. All of the athletes interviewed had a tutor provided by the athletic department for at least one class. Furthermore, seven of the student-athletes revealed that outside of meeting with the resource staff provided to them by the athletic department (i.e. tutors, learning specialist) that they did not study.

Storm did not study at all at home, and instead filled his time playing video games. He relied on a learning specialist to assist him with his schoolwork. "My learning specialist help me a lot, as far as my work and such," Storm said. "If I have anything due, she help me with that. I have meetings and stuff she keep me on track with that. As far as work, she keep me up to date." Overall, Storm felt that his learning specialist was essential to his academic success and helping him to stay organized.

Xio explained to me that he had trouble "rememberlizing stuff." To assist him, Xio enlisted the help of tutors and learning specialist. "I get help with tutors," Xio said, "That's a boost." Xio enjoyed meeting with his learning specialist, and felt a sense of pride completing tasks that his peers had not yet completed:

> Ah…it's good, like, uh, (learning specialist) helps me with most of my stuff and tonight I got tutoring at uh 7 and I got one at 8, but uh everybody else they struggling to do their work. I'm already done. Like we do stuff ahead of time. That's what I like. We just jump on it. So we don't have to worry about it later on, so umm…that' good.

Aside from the services that Xio utilized, he also sits in the front of the classroom to stay focused and uses flash cards. Although Xio utilizes tutors and learning specialists to assist him with his academic endeavors, he does not use any other accommodations that he is eligible for based on his learning disability and/or ADHD. "I don't use none of 'em to be honest," Xio stated. "I think I get longer time on test, and I get a recorded in class, stuff like that. I don't use it though." Thus, although Xio is aware that he is eligible to receive accommodations due to his learning disability and/or ADHD, he does not take advantage of his accommodations.

Thomas does not like school because he does not like "studying and stuff." However, he admitted that he does have to study for his tutors. Thomas meets with his tutors and learning specialist, and thinks that they help him succeed in the classroom. He is tutored "twice to three times a week," and meets with his learning specialist "every day" for assistance. Although Thomas is aware that he is registered with the disability service center on campus, other than tutors and learning specialist, Thomas does not use other accommodations that he is eligible for based on his ADD.

Tim does not particularly like school, but he realized that "school is a must." The athletic academic support staff has helped Tim to stay on track with his classwork. They have provided him with tutors, ensure that he has completed his work, and is attending class. Tim not only utilized tutors to help him with his classes, but also met with a learning specialist. He is aware of disability services on campus, and utilizes his accommodations which allow him to receive a copy of the notes. Tim also utilizes other strategies that make learning easier. Tim said making "flash cards" as well as talking to himself out loud have helped him in his academic endeavors.

Roger expressed to me that he feels school is more important than football, and he enjoys the social aspect of school, but said, "I don't really study a lot." He admitted that when it comes to school his biggest challenge is "taking test" because he has trouble with memorization. Although Roger feels school is important, college has presented itself to be more difficult than high school:

> High school was such much easier, high school was easier. I ain't go to one of those high school that ya know, the football players didn't have to do their work. I mean, we got away with a lot, but we still had to do our work. It wasn't real difficult.

To help him succeed in college, Roger takes advantages of services such as tutors and learning specialist:

> Well, I take advantage of the tutors. I use that actually as a time to do my work. When I see the tutors, so. That's why I don't do it at home. We got so many tutors and learning specialist that when we meet with them it's time to do our work.

Although Roger takes advantage of services that are offered through the athletic department, he is unsure of what his diagnosis is as well as the services that he can utilize through disability services on his campus to further assist him in his academic endeavors. When it comes to strategies, Roger has learned that staying proactive in class and taking notes can be beneficial. "I used to hate taking notes," Roger said, "but now I realize how much they actually help."

Jeremy is learning how to balance both school and football. He enjoys school, especially "the environment of school." When it came to describing the academic program at Jeremy's school, Jeremy said, "It's a program that help me get better with doing my work." To help him with his classes, Jeremy went to tutoring for his "major" classes.

Although Jeremy uses tutors to help him with his work, he is unaware of his disability and could not tell me about the accommodations he was eligible to receive because of his learning disability and/or ADHD. Jeremy uses several strategies to help him with his schoolwork, including paying attention and repetition. "I'm a visual learner," Jeremy answered, "I just go over it."

Dewayne felt that he learned at a difference pace when compared to his peers. "I think they just say I'm a slow learner. I mean I learn, but I just learn shower than most kids. I guess I have to study more…a lot more," Dewayne stated. Dewayne struggles with reading and math. To assist in his learning, Dewayne used the technique of memorization. "Basically, I try to memorize it and it I can't memorize it, it's just hard for me," Dewayne stated, "So, I try to memorize it the best way I can. I try to study a lot if I can."

To help Dewayne with his learning, he has "a lot of tutoring." When Dewayne studied, he was primarily studying with tutors; however, he did study "10 to 15 minutes" at home after tutoring to keep the material fresh in his mind. Although Dewayne could not tell me what specifically his disability was, he did explain to me that he had met with disability services on his campus and did take advantage of accommodations that he was eligible for due to his learning disability and/or ADHD:

> I believe it's called disability services. I went over there and had a meeting with one of the ladies over there, I mean it's a good program. Like they make sure they get you whatever you need, whatever your disability is they try to put you in a situation where it's good for you.

Due to his learning disability and/or ADHD, Dewayne is eligible to receive extended time on tests, an accommodation that he took advantage of. Furthermore, Dewayne uses the

technique of memorization to assist him in answering test questions. He felt that he is good at memorizing material, and if he does not prepare for the test then he can become stuck and cannot answer the question.

For Michael, college has been significantly harder than high school. The hardest thing about school, according to Michael, is making good grades. “It’s hard to make an A in college,” Michael stated, “In high school it’s really easy, but in college you really got to put your time into it.” In high school, Michael had friends that would provide him with additional assistance in regards to his academic work. ”Like in high school I got people that like helped me cheat and such,” Michael stated. Michael believed that because he was a good football player that the students at his high school would help him to cheat; however, has realized that in college such behaviors are too risky:

> Like, they helped me, like look on their test and get the answer and pass and stuff. Then you like get to college and you really can’t do that cause if you get caught you really can get kicked out of school and stuff.

To help Michael achieve academically in college, he had tutors help him “the best way they can.” For Michael, tutoring had proved to be extremely beneficial. “Yes, it helped me out a lot,” Michael said, “I know on my own I wouldn’t study, so like ‘cause I got to study, it helped a lot.” Tutoring is the only accommodation that Michael took advantage. However, he has learned that it is beneficial to “study the day before the test.”

Due to his strong performance in the classroom, Ron is the only student-athlete I interviewed that is not required to be in the academic center to attend mandatory meetings with tutors and/or a learning specialist because he is not deemed “at-risk.” Despite his outstanding academic efforts, Ron still takes advantage of tutors, his academic advisors,

and his accommodations to help him navigate in the classroom despite being diagnosed with dyslexia. Ron has a difficult time reading, and so he tends to take more math courses. Every semester, he requests tutors to assist him with topics that he may be "struggling" with. "It's mostly English," Ron explained, "I have trouble mostly with spelling and with punctuation." To assist him with his struggles in English, Ron also utilizes the writing center in the athletic department to help him proof read his papers. Furthermore, Ron spoke very highly of his academic advisors who periodically check in on him to see how he is fairing in the classroom and to provide him with support.

Ron is aware of his disability, and ensured his teachers knew he was dyslexic and may need additional assistance. "I tell all my teachers I have accommodations here," Ron said, "I can record things in class and use my computer to take notes." Although Ron does not always use the accommodations that are available to him to because he is an individual with dyslexia, he seeks out help when assistance is needed.

Ron learned he was dyslexic in fourth grade. His credits his parents for helping him learn strategies to assist him with his dyslexia.

> Well, they have always been there, both of my parents have. If I ever need anything proof read, she will do it for me. I'm a slow typer, so if I ever had to type for a whole, I would type and then she would type in two minutes and get half of a page done. Then I would start typing again. My dad has done that too. When I was younger it was hard for me to read fast, to before I had books on tape, they would read out loud to me. It's just been a big help.

Aside from his parents assisting him with learning strategies to help Ron overcome dyslexia, he worked with a learning specialist in elementary school and middle school who

helped to teach him learning techniques and strategies. Ron utilized several techniques that help him in the classroom.

> Um, spelling, kind of elementary spelling test type thing. I would literally sit down with my mom and I would spell it. If I got it wrong, I would spell it three times. Just repetitive things like that helped me a lot. What else do I do? It's all routine now, so I don't even realize it half of the time. I like making list, like what I have to do, kind of a check list. I'm happy when I get to check something off the list. I can't go to long without taking a break because I get distracted. I've noticed that, I've gotten a lot better at it. I sit down to try to do something, and then the stack of papers over here is messy. So, I clean that up. It's almost like I'm avoiding it, but I'm continually not trying to do it.

Ron is very knowledgeable about his learning disability and utilized strategies as well as accommodations to assist him in his academic success.

Overall, although the student-athletes who participated in this study had diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD, they appeared to be motivated to learn and felt that they had the capability to learn. All of the participants took advantage of the academic accommodations that the athletic department offered. Although many participants were unaware of what learning disability they were diagnosed and few took advantage of the accommodations that were offered to them through disability services because of their learning disability and/or ADHD, several participants utilized learning techniques and strategies that assisted them in the classroom.

Stereotypes

The final theme that appeared in the data was that of stereotypes. Many of the participates spoke of instances in which they were judged, misperceived, or made fun of because of their appearance, their diagnosis of a learning disability and/or ADHD, or because they were a student-athlete. Two sub-themes emerged regarding stereotypes, "the entertainer," and "dumb." Some student-athletes told of instances in which they were expected to be entertainers and many participants described situations in which they felt dumb and were told they were dumb or inadequate.

The entertainer. Within their interviews, several participants described instances in which individuals around them expected them to take on the role the entertainer. According to Roger, his friends would describe him as "always laughing goofy and stilly." Although Roger portrays himself as the "goofy" when he is within his social group, he feels that he is expected to make his peers laugh in the classroom.

> I was in health class, here, and I feel like three dudes in this class. There were three dudes in this class, and like 25 female. I'm the only Black person. So when she like call on me to say something everyone like expected me to say something funny, to tell a joke, they waiting on me to be entertaining or something. I did that once, and they like expect me to so that every time.

Roger acted out as the class clown, and it then became an expectation within that environment. "I donno," Roger said, "they feel like I'm supposed to entertain 'em or something." Roger's behavior in class appeared to become an expectation, and he felt forced to portray the role of the class clown. Furthermore, because Roger was the only Black male in the class, perhaps he felt pressured to portray that stereotype.

Michael tends to present himself as the class clown within the school setting. “I’m loud,” Michael explained, “and I try to get lots of attention, but to me that’s just me.” Although Michael believes that being loud and striving for attention in class is just his personality, it would appear that he feels his teachers do not disapprove of his classroom antics. Similarly, Xio also expressed that in the classroom he finds himself “laughing” and “joking around.”

When Thomas’ friends and family surround him, he is never serious. “I’m always that guy that dicks around, I’m never serious about anything,” Thomas claimed. However, according to Thomas, this behavior is not well received by his coaches. “Coaches probably think I party a lot,” Thomas explained. Because of football Thomas seldom parties. He admitted to me that he had not drank in over seven month; yet, Thomas feels that his coaches do not view him as anything more than a party animal.

Large and tall men are expected to entertain spectators on the basketball court or the football field. From a very young age, Ron has always been bigger than his classmates. Due to his size, however, Ron’s parents encouraged him to participate in football:

> For me, it’s kinda of a way to be big and be appreciated. ‘Cause, I didn’t get made fun of, but it was always like oh, he’s big. I mean I wasn’t always the most athletic person, but now I can develop athleticism, keep playing sports, keep being competitive, and have fun.

Ron felt that because he was big he had an obligation to play football. Having been made fun of for his size by his peers, Ron felt that by participating in the sport, it would allow him to gain the acceptance that he desired.

Ron is an individual with dyslexia, and as such, he had difficulty processing words and numbers. When Ron was in middle school, he was asked to read out loud; however, his dyslexia made that task difficult. "If I have to read out loud I say Bear with me, I might struggle over some words because I'm dyslexic," Ron explained, "Or, if I mix up something, and someone kind of laughs, I just say 'hey be quiet I'm dyslexic.' Kind of like a joke or something, so." Although Ron has dyslexia and is not ashamed of his disability, he avoids reading out loud over facing possible embarrassment form his peers. Even if his peers make a comment about his disability, according to Ron, he is quick to turn the situation into a comedy, essentially, using humor to conceal discomfort.

Overall, based on their humorous behavior and/or appearance some participants felt forced to serve as the entertainment factor in many different situations. The ability of the participants to use humor could serve as a method for them to hide their true scholastic capabilities out of fear of failure, or even to uphold the persona which they feel obligated to portray. Whatever the case may be, several student-athletes in this study were branded as the entertainer.

Dumb. Upon analyzing the data, it was clear that many participants felt that they were perceived as dumb because they were a student-athlete or because they had a learning disability and/or ADHD. In elementary school, Jeremy was teased by his peers. "They used to say I couldn't read or something," Jeremy recollected. Upon learning that he has a learning disability, Jeremy said that he felt different, and knew that he had to work harder than his peers. If Jeremy reached or exceeded expectations, he was often criticized. "They try to being me down," Jeremy said, "Like I overachieved and they tried to bring me

down." In order for Jeremy to excel in the classroom, he had to work harder than his peers; yet, when he did achieve he was degraded.

Xio felt that his teachers treated him differently because he was a student-athlete. "You know what teachers think about athletes," Xio said, "They think we have it easy and stuff, I just take my notes in class and go home." Although Xio feels that he "ain't that smart" and that the majority of students attending his school "gotta have that money," he works as hard as "everybody else." Xio provided me with an example of how student-athletes are treated differently than their non-athlete peers, "Like say a football player walk in late, he give us a hard time," he said, "Like a regular student walk in late, he don't say nothing." While Xio expressed his desire to be treated equal, because "we just ain't athletes, we student-athletes."

While in high school, Tim felt that many of those who were supposed to be there to support him failed to believe in him and his dream of being the first person in his family to graduate from college:

> Everybody at my high school, even my high school coaches, they didn't have no faith in me Because they thought I was dumb, everybody thought I was dumb. They told me I wasn't going to make it at (school name). I'm still here after two years.

The fact that Tim had made it through the first two years of college was more than what was expected of him from individuals at his high school. Tim felt used by his high school coaches. To his face he was called a great athlete, and behind his back he was called "dumb" and essentially incapable of succeeding at the next level. In Tim's eyes, he used this to prove those who doubted him wrong.

Ron felt that growing up, he was often serotyped due to his socioeconomic status as well as his learning disability:

> My high school is kind of divided into two middle schools. My area was a little but more wealthy. We always got perceived as the snobby rich kids type thing. Just kind of had to deal with that going into high school. But, before I was diagnosed a dyslexic, I was perceived as dumb, and kind of stereotyped as that. I knew I wasn't, it was just some aspects of my education that were lacking.

Ron's parents are both college-educated and have white-collar jobs. Thus, not only was Ron struggling to meet the high academic expectations set forth by his parents, he also was fighting to meet the expectations of his social world. When Ron began having problems reading and writing the early years of primary education, he was confused. He felt capable, yet could not perform. His teachers often mistook his poor performance in school (due to his dyslexia) as Ron just being lazy and dumb.

> Back then, (I felt) bad, just because I was younger and I didn't know. Still in the learning faze, socially awkward still. Um, but definitely tried to, it definitely did affect me. It make me feel a step above worthless almost. In some aspects, and in other aspects it was fine. Education wise and in English it made me feel like I couldn't do it.

Ron acknowledged that he was very fortunate to have the opportunity to go to great public schools where he had access to appropriate resources to assist him with his dyslexia. However, despite the educational assistance Ron received, he still dislikes reading and writing and fears reading aloud.

In a group setting Dewayne often feels misplaced. He feels that because is a person with a learning disability makes it difficult to answer questions:

> I just think that sometimes with other kids asking me questions. I mean when you're in a group doing group work with other kids who are asking you questions, and you don't know how to do it, I think that's where you get kinda awkward with it. With you disability. You just don't really know what to do next.

Although Dewayne wants to interact and participate within a group setting, his diagnosis makes him feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, by failing to participate in group projects he further isolates himself from his peers, feeling more incapable.

Being tested for a learning disability also made two participants, Tim and Michael feel dumb. Tim recalled going to get tested for a learning disability and/or ADHD, and was not enthusiastic about the process:

> They take me to, I went and seen like a counselor or something. She went and did a series of test or something; I did an exam with my learning specialist. She put me through like a lot of math questions and like timed me, how fast I can do it. I read, I read for her. Different things like that, I get my words backwards sometimes.

Tim felt that the various tests as well as the testing procedure that he was put through to see if he had a learning disability and/or ADHD made him "feel kinda dumb." Michael had a similar experience and did not say anything positive about his testing days. "They made me take a dumb test," Michael said, "Like an elementary test, like the made me do stuff with blocks and numbers and such. Like stupid stuff." Clearly, both Tim and Michael had negative experiences when being tested for learning disabilities and/or ADHD and the testing format made them feel dumb.

These instances of stereotyping appeared to impact the participants' sense of self-worth. Many participants felt dumb because of their learning disabilities, while others had teachers or peer groups that made them feel belittled. The student-athletes I spoke with were in situations where they felt dumb, and many of the instances in which these student-athletes were stereotyped remained sharp in their minds.

Although the circumstances varied, nearly every participant shared with me an instance in which he was stereotyped. The participants appeared aware of situations that they were stereotyped in; however, they seemed rather eager to disprove what they felt were false impressions. Although the majority of the participants in this study self-identified as African American or Black, there was only one example given in which a participant specifically states that perhaps race was a motive behind the label. Furthermore, the majority of the situations as described by the participants were related to academia and not necessary athletics.

Conclusion. Overall, it appeared that the student-athletes enjoyed playing the game of football, and football was a positive influence on the lives of the participants. It was because of football that many student-athletes learning admirable traits. Furthermore, football allowed most of the student-athletes to focus, and being on the football field allowed them to put all of their worries aside. The data also revealed that these student-athletes felt that they could learn and they wanted to learn. Every student-athlete I spoke with took advantage of the services (i.e. tutoring and mentoring) that was offered to them, although, most student-athletes were unaware of what their diagnosis was and the accommodations that they were eligible for due to their diagnosis of a learning disability and/or ADHD. Lastly, several student-athletes described instances in which they were

stereotyped based on their appearance or because of their social standing on campus as a student-athlete.

In the next chapter I will answer my research questions by connecting the themes to previous literature. Chapter five will also focus on the limitations of this study, as well as provide ideas for future research. Furthermore, the implementations of this study and how higher education administrators, athletic administrators, faculty members, and student-athletes can use the finding of this study to better the experience for student-athletes with learning disabilities and ADHD will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. Based on the demographic information received from the participants, it appears that the sample is in line with much of the literature. The sample for this study primarily consisted of African American football student-athletes, and was consistent with the literature decsribing that African American males with learning disabilities tend to be overrepresented in the American education system (Ong-Dean, 2006; Shifer et al., 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). In addition, the majority of the participants (five) were diagnosed with a learning disability upon entering higher education; this appears to be consistent with the trend of students failing to be diagnosed with learning disabilities and/or ADHD until they reach higher education (Stodden, 2003). In this chapter, I will discuss how the themes informed my research questions as well as the limitations and implementations of this study.

Navigating the Demands of Higher Education

The first research question was: "How do football student-athletes with a learning disabilities and/or ADHD navigate the demands of higher education?" Throughout the data, the themes of the impact of football as well as learning competence appeared to assist the participants in meeting the demands of higher education. Football played a significant role in the experience of the participants, allowing them to develop skills that could transition into the classroom. The participants also revealed that despite having a learning disability, they were self-empowered to learn and used resources such as accommodations as well as

learning techniques to assist them in navigating the demands of higher education (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007).

The impact of football. The participants explained that participating in football had a tremendous impact on their experience. Playing football allowed the student-athletes to focus as well we develop positive characteristics such as being "men," and "good kids." The student-athletes who were interviewed began playing football for various reasons: because of their physical build, because their friends or family members played, or simply because they wanted to play. Several scholars express that many football student-athletes participate in the game due to external pressure from parents (Louis, 2010; Yost, 2010); however, not one participant in this study reported playing football due to parental influence.

Participating in football allowed the participants to focus, serving as a way for them to clear their minds. Several participants spoke of the fact that they were focused on the football field, but admitted that they needed to increase their focus in classroom settings. It is not surprising that student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD find it difficult to focus in the classroom. These students typically struggle in the classroom, particularly with subjects such as math and science (Lerner & Johns, 2012). However, on the playing field participants can focus. Perhaps this could be due do the fact that those with learning disabilities and/or ADHD often face rejection in the classroom (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010); however, on the playing field they feel that are equal to their peers and accepted when playing their sport (Conderman, 1995). Furthermore, studies have shown that participating in high-intensity exercise serves as a treatment for ADHD (Kiluk et al., 2010; Kreher, 2012). Thus, when student-athletes with

ADHD are participating in their sport, student-athletes with ADHD actually feel better because the exercise is repressing the symptoms. Two of the participants were prescribed ADHD medication to help them focus. Interestingly enough, the participants felt that the medication decreased their performance in football by not allowing them to eat and keep on the weight they needed to be successful so, they did not take the medication. They chose football over the medication that could help them to focus and perform better in the classroom.

Many of the participants described that they liked playing football because they enjoyed hitting people and not getting in trouble for displaying aggression. It is common for students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD to display aggression (Cortiella, 2011; Quinn et al., 2001). Many students with ADHD often have behavioral issues (DuPaul & Weyandt, 2007; Weyandy, 2007). So, perhaps participating in a contact sport allowed the participants a socially acceptable way to release the anger and frustration that often comes with having a learning disability and/or ADHD (Cortiella, 2011; Kiluk et al., 2010; Quinn et al., 2001).

The literature has shown that participating in intercollegiate athletics can be beneficial by teaching student-athletes time management skills, discipline, and increased self-esteem (Harmon, 2010; Jolly, 2008). Similarly to past studies, the student-athletes that participated in this study also benefitted from participating in intercollegiate sport. The participants felt participating in football made them better men, a good person, and allowed them to stay out of trouble. Students with learning disabilities often are suspended from school (Wagner et al., 2003). In fact, one participant in this study described himself as a “bad kid” who was frequently suspended throughout secondary education until he

realized that he would possibly play football at the collegiate level. The prospect of playing football encouraged him to stay out of trouble. Another participant described that participating in football made him aspire to be different from where he came from, "the ghetto." From a young age, African American males are often told that they are expected to be athletes (Lewis, 2010); it is believed, that sport will provide these young men an escape from their surrounds and social mobility to college and the professional ranks (Yost, 2010). Although few of the participants spoke about the possibility of playing professionally, it was clear that they felt football gave them the opportunity to better themselves.

Learning competence. Several of the participants described their high school experience as "easy," many stating that they put minimal effort into their academic work throughout high school. One student-athlete in this study even said that because he was a football player, he was able to cheat off of his friends throughout high school. Scenarios like this are not rare in the high school setting. Successful interscholastic athletes are often passed through primary and secondary education (Beem, 2006; Guthring, 2004) and receive preferential treatment due to their athletic ability (White, 2008). By allowing interscholastic athletes to cheat, it reiterates that athletics takes precedence over academics (Beem, 2006; Guthring, 2004). Furthermore, it creates low expectations for those who participate in sports and does not allow them to effectively prepare themselves academically for the next level (Beem, 2006; Benson, 2000). Student-athletes are aware that they are perceived as "dumb jocks," and thus, are held to lower academic standards (Burk, 1993; Harrison et al., 2009; Preacco, 2009; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Watt & Moore, 2001). When athletes are allowed to cheat, those individuals who are contributing to

academic fraud are feeding into that stereotype. Stereotype threat has been shown to contribute to the underperformance of student-athletes (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005).

Interestingly enough, the student-athletes recognized that college was far more challenging than high school, and, in order to succeed they must work harder. The participants that were interviewed were resilient; they appeared to be driven to learn, and, furthermore, they felt that they could learn. Literature regarding students with learning disabilities revealed that those with learning disabilities often are rejected, teased, ignored, and are less popular than their peers without learning disabilities (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arexxo & Moore-Thomas). Athletes with ADHD experience low self-esteem (Kiluk et al., 2009). Not only are these students diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD, but they are also student-athletes (Clark & Parette, 2002). Often times, student-athletes feel that they are perceived as lazy, dumb, and unmotivated (Simons et al., 2007). Despite past studies which state that student-athletes and those with learning disabilities feel that they are unable to learn, the participants in this study felt that they could learn and they wanted to learn. When students communicate their wants and desires, in this case, the desire to learn, it is referred to as self-advocacy (Vaughn et al., 2007).

Literature suggest that because many student-athletes lack academic merit, and receive exceptions during the admission process, this leads to the development of stereotypes (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Harrison, Lawrence, 2004; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). Student-athletes are seem as stupid, lazy, and incapable (Harrison et al., 2009; King & Springwood, 2001; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Sailes, 1998). Despite the stereotypes surrounding student-athletes, the student-athletes in this study believed they could learn, despite their

disability, and the fact they were student-athletes. Although some student-athletes did not like school, many expressed they enjoyed the educational environment. Stereotype Threat Theory is based on the notion that an individual will have a different social identity based on the setting the individual is placed in (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). In this case, the participants felt comfortable in their environments, and rather than validate the social identity of the "dumb jock," the disconfirmed the expectations of their social environment. Steele (1997) believes that the only way for a stereotype to be overcome, it must be disproved. Thus, because the participants felt that they could learn and they wanted to succeed, the threat was reduced.

The participants in this study not only felt that they could learn, but that they learned better with football, and, simply that learning was easier with football. This finding brings into account that these student-athletes with learning disabilities may learn differently. Literature regarding learning styles was popular throughout the 1980s, with more than 60 studies on learning styles being conducted (Dunn, Beaudry, & Klavas, 1989). The literature suggests that everyone learns in different ways, and each person has a particular learning style (Dunn et al., 1989). When students understand their learning style, and instructors use methods that engage particular learning styles, students' academic achievement increases (Dunn et al., 1989). Observational studies have shown that general education classrooms in the United States teach to one type of learner, the students typically sit in their seats, and the instructor teaches in a lecture-based setting from information presented in the textbook (Cuban 1993; Goodlad 1984; Nystrand 1997). However, not all students learn in such an environment (Bransford, 2002). These participants learned differently. They learned through football. Howard Gardner's (1993)

theory of multiple intelligences infers that people learn in different ways and through different domains and modes of instruction. In this particular case, it would appear that the student-athletes in this study possess what Gardner (1993) refers to as bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Gardner speaks to the "body as a form of intelligence" (p. 207). In fact, Gardner (1993) specifically references football players when referring to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. This intelligence involves extensive communication from the brain to the various mechanisms in the body, and further involves coordination, goal setting, and timing (Gardner, 1993). The objects in the intelligence are the athletes' hands, which are used to shape various elements of the individual's social world (Gardner, 1993). The body is individualized and serves as a "vessel of the individual's sense of self, his most personal feelings and aspirations, as well as that entity to which others respond in special ways because of their uniquely human qualities" (Gardner, 1993, p. 265-236). Therefore, just because these athletes learn through football, this does not mean that they lack intelligence; they use their body as a form of intelligence. It should also be mentioned that perhaps student-athletes with learning disabilities and ADHD have difficulty focusing and learning in the classroom because that is simply not how they learn.

Another interesting observation that was made by the research team is that the majority of the participants were defensive players. Thus, I have to wonder if student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD are overrepresented in defensive positions. Perhaps the argument can be made that learning styles influence what positions players play. Thus, perhaps how a student-athlete learns and their learning strengths and weakness can impact the positions athletes gravitate to. After all, playing defense is more reactionary and does not require learning an offensive playbook and the complexities of an

offense. This finding warrants further investigation. This is a finding that should be highlighted, as this is a finding that is not in the literature.

Many participants expressed that they took advantage of the resources offered to them by the athletic department. All of the participants had tutors and all but one participant worked with a learning specialist. It is very positive and encouraging that student-athletes took advantage of some of the resources that were provided to them, because many students with learning disabilities tend to fall behind in their schoolwork (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Furthermore, the literature describes the large amount of money that higher education is spending on academic support for student-athletes (Wolverton, 2008). Thus, if there is a need for these services and clearly student-athletes are utilizing such resources, investing in tutors and mentors appears to be a positive experience and a wise investment. Participants also learned strategies that assisted in enhancing the learning process. They used materials such as: flashcards, memorization techniques, studying before the test, repetition, taking notes, and sitting in the front of the class to help them learn. Using such skills to achieve a goal is referred to in the special education literature as self-determination (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007).

The participants felt that their tutors, mentors, and athletic academic advisors played an important role in their academic success. In fact, many of the participants relied so heavily on the support of tutors and mentors that several did not study or do any schoolwork when they were not with a tutor or mentor. Due to the demands of intercollegiate athletics, it is important that these students receive structured support (Weiss, 2011). However, offering student-athletes almost unlimited support services could be enabling them, allowing these student-athletes to feel that they are incapable of doing

any kind of work on their own. Student-athletes are already seen as academically incapable (Simons et al., 2007). Therefore, by requiring them to go to tutoring sessions and meet with mentors, it is possible that negative stereotypes of student-athletes "not being smart" and motivated are being confirmed (Burke 2003; Nelson, 1983; Moore, 2001). This leads to stereotype threat.

Although these student-athletes took advantage of the academic services offered through the athletic student-life center, similarly to the findings of White's (2008) study, most did not take advantage of the other accommodations that were offered to them based on their disability. Many were also unaware of their diagnosis. This is consistent with the literature because the majority of individuals do not understand learning disabilities (Smith-D'arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010; Termaine Foundation, 2010). However, it is important that the students understand their diagnosis and take advantage of the accommodations that are provided to them because of their disability. Utilizing accommodations from disability services can assist in meeting the individual need of the student-athlete (Troiano et al., 2010). Although most college students with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD fail to seek out the appropriate accommodations (Wagner et al., 2003), students who choose to use the resources to assist them with their disability have higher GPAs as well as graduation rates when compared to those students who do not use their accommodations (Toriano et al., 2010).

The participants did not appear to be ashamed or embarrassed at the fact they had a learning disability and/or ADHD. Yet, they did not use the accommodations they were eligible for, and most participants admitted that they did not tell anyone (i.e. friends) that they were diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. Thus, I have to wonder if the

fear of being labeled or perceived as dumb detoured student-athletes from using their accommodations. Some of the participants said that they did not use their accommodations because they said they did not need to; however, the goal of accommodations is to help these students compete in the classroom and be on an equal playing field with their peers who do not have disabilities. Many student-athletes are unprepared for higher education (Gerdy, 2006; Yost, 2010), as are students with learning disabilities (Banco, 2011). Therefore, it is critical that this population better understands their disability to ensure they are successful in the classroom (Toriano et al., 2010).

There are many negative stereotypes regarding learning disabilities and/or ADHD. A Tremaine Foundation (2010) report revealed that 75% of the general population associates learning disabilities with more major disabilities like autism. Students with learning disabilities also face criticism from their peers and are not accepted into social groups (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arexxo & Moore-Thomas). An individual is a product of his environment, and if a culture views learning disabilities as negative, then those beliefs will most likely influence how the individual views his social world (S. Steele, 1991). This idea is referred to as racial vulnerability (S. Steele, 1991). Therefore, if an individual's peers, parents, and teachers believe that learning disabilities and/or ADHD are negative and people who have learning disabilities and/or ADHD are stupid, most likely a student-athlete who is already believed to lack academic aptitude (Ryske, 2002) will not use his accommodations out of fear being labeled (Toriano et al., 2010). Although the participants did not particularly speak about being embarrassed in regarding to having a learning disability, the lack of knowledge that the student-athletes possessed about their disability as well as most of the participants' unwillingness to utilize accommodations could be an

indicator that the participants did not want to be in any way affiliated with having a learning disability and/or ADHD.

Past studies have shown that high profile sports programs in elite conferences have been known to cluster student-athletes, particularly minority student-athletes, into certain majors that maybe less academically challenging; thus, ensuring the eligibility of student-athletes (Fountain & Fenley, 2009, 2011; Otto, 2010; Suggs, 2003). Although the participants in this study appeared to have diverse majors and were not necessary clustered in the same majors, a form of clustering did exist. This particular institution did not offer programs that many of the student-athletes were interested in majoring in (i.e. criminal justice, coaching). Thus, the participants were forced to pursue other majors in areas that they might have not been necessary interested in. Furthermore, some student-athletes described that due to the time constraints that football placed on their lives, they were forced to major in less challenging majors. Major clustering refers to when more than 25% of student-athletes on a one sports team are enrolled in the same major (Case, Greer, & Brown, 1987). So, although the participants were enrolled in various majors, some of the student-athletes had to choose majors because of the role that football played in their lives. Situations like having to choose a major that is in essence dictated by football can be perceived as stereotype threat. Student-athletes are not expected to be academically motivated (Simons et al., 2007). Therefore, by allowing football to determine what student-athletes can major in could deliver the message that student-athletes do not have the capability of playing football and having a challenging major (Burke 2003; Hardin, Trendafilova, Stokowski, & Koo, 2013; Nelson, 1983; Moore, 2001).

Along with some of the participants' majors being dictated by their sport, the student-athlete's learning disability and/or ADHD played a role in their major choice. Ron, for example, is dyslexic and has difficulty with reading and written expressing. Therefore, Ron chose to major in pre-business because science and math and not necessary reading and writing drive the program. Other participants struggled with subjects like math and science and chose to pick a major like communication and general studies that required little math and science.

Having a learning disability and/or ADHD greatly influenced the academic performance of the participants. Despite the participant having a learning disability and/or ADHD, the student-athletes believed they could learn and expressed a desire to learn. Ultimately, that desire to learn assisted in eliminating the threat. The student-athletes took advantage of resources within athletic student-life office and utilized effective learning strategies. Furthermore, the some of the participants' diagnosis assisted them in determining their major. Football also impacted how the participants navigated through higher education. Participating in football was a large part of their experience, and the participants not only learned from playing football but their learning style was influenced by football.

Situations of Stereotype Threat

The second research question asked: "In what situations do football student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD experience instances of stereotype threat?" Stereotype was a major theme that appeared throughout the data. I feel it should be noted that although six of the participants that were interviewed identified themselves as African American or Black, only one participant mentioned that he felt labeled in the classroom

because of his race. The participants described two main situations in which they felt stereotyped, the first being that, at times, in the classroom the student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD were expected to take on the role of the "entertainer," and the second was the fact that because they were football players and they had a learning disability there were instances in which the participants felt dumb.

The entertainer. It has been documented that some faculty members feel that student-athletes lack intelligence (King & Springwood, 2001; Sailes, 1998) and are unmotivated in the classroom (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001). One of the participants in this study described that he experienced instances in which faculty members treated student-athletes differently than their non-athlete peers. Essentially, he described situations in which student-athletes were held to unfair double standards.

Student-athletes feel that faculty members think they are lazy and essentially stupid (Simons et al., 2007). When an individual is aware of the negative stereotype regarding his social group, and confirms that stereotype, stereotype threat occurs (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Factors such as faculty members treating student-athletes differently than their non-athlete peers can greatly impact those in the under-represented social group (S. Steele, 1991). Thus, when situations like the one described by the participant occurs, student-athletes are at risk of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1955; S. Steele, 1991). Based on the literature as well as the experience of the participant in this study, instances in which faculty members treat athletes differently occur; however, with awareness the threat can be reduced. Student-athletes are a part of the student-body, and faculty members should better understand this population as well as the specific needs of this population (Watt &

Moore, 2001). Furthermore, student-athletes need to be educated on how to approach and build relationships with faculty members.

The lack of academic merit expressed by some student-athletes that have been given preferential treatment regarding athletic admission has led to the development of stereotypes (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Harrison, Lawrence, 2004; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). Student-athletes have long been stereotyped as "dumb jocks" (Harrison et al., 2009; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988). When asked how they are perceived, student-athletes reported that they are seen as unintelligent, lazy, and coddled (Simons, Bosworth, Fujta, & Jensen, 2007). Campus groups such as faculty members and students assume that student-athletes lack intelligence (King & Springwood, 2001; Sailes, 1998), and put forth far less motivation in the classroom than they do on the playing field (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001). If both student-athletes and faculty members developed a greater understanding and mutual respect for one another, instances of stereotype threat could be reduced (Steele, 1997).

Most of the participants in this study believed that their friends would describe them as funny. Often times, students with learning disabilities will act out in an effort to conceal their academic insecurities (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Furthermore, because many individuals do not understand what learning disabilities are, often times those with learning disabilities are unaccepted by their peers without disabilities (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010; Tremaine Foundation, 2010). Student-athletes with learning disabilities are a particular at risk because not only are they facing scrutiny because they are a student-athletes, but also as a person with a learning disability (Clark & Parette, 2002). Perhaps in

an effort to mask their learning disability, many of the participants were the "class clown." One participant described that because he was Black and a student-athlete, that when in the classroom his peers expected him to take on the role of the entertainer. In an effort to deter their classmates and peers, it appears that the participants took on this role, ultimately validating the stereotype that student-athletes are lazy and have little interest in academics (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001). By encompassing the stereotype, stereotype threat has occurred (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). In order for the threat to be eliminated, student-athletes should not feel the need to validate the stereotype.

Dumb. Many of the student-athletes who were interviewed said that people thought that they were dumb and that when they were tested for a learning disability they felt dumb. These situations validate that the "dumb jock" stereotype is very much a part of the experience for these student-athletes (Harrison et al., 2009; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988). When students are repeatedly told they are dumb and do not belong on a college campus, many begin to believe that they are incapable of being successful (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Harrison, Lawrence, 2004; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). When student-athletes believe they are dumb, and thus do not try, failure occurs. Soon, this underachievement is an expectation (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Interestingly enough, although the participants were aware that they were labeled as dumb, they used this "label" as motivation. Thus, creating a positive environment for student-athletes can help this population of students to overcome obstacles (Bransford, 2000; Murphy & Taylor, 2012).

Furthermore, two participants described the process of being tested for a learning disability and/or ADHD as a very negative experience that made them feel dumb. One athlete described the testing procedure as "they made me take the dumb test." The way the screener, and, if necessary, the learning disability test is presented to student-athletes is important. Many student-athletes are already aware of the sigma that surrounds them; by having them tested for a learning disability, student-athletes may feel that that stigma is being reinforced. Therefore, in order to eliminate the threat and student-athletes performing poorly on the test because they feel that is what is expected of them those who administrator the screener need to use a non-threatening approach (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Conclusions. Overall, it appeared that many of the findings were consistent with the literature. The student-athletes revealed many instances of stereotype threat, and in some instances used stereotypes as a way to empower themselves. The situations in which the threat presented itself appeared consisted with the literature. Thus, it appears that it is now time to take action to prevent the threats from occurring.

Limitations

As with any study, limitations do exist.

Stereotype Threat. Based on the literature, in the conceptual stages of this study, the use of Stereotype Threat Theory as the theoretical framework was extremely logical. After all, the literature points to the fact that student-athletes are often perceived as lazy, dumb, and incapable (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 2006; Gurney & Weber, 2010; Harrison, Lawrence, 2004; Sack & Staurowsky, 1988; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Yost, 2010). African American students are often seen as athletes, not students, and have difficulty navigating

their way through predominately white institutions because of the negative way African American student-athletes are perceived (Coakley, 2007; McDonald et al., 2007; McIntosh, 2002; Stone et al., 2009). However, the findings in this study did not support Stereotype Threat Theory as I had predicted. Perhaps with a larger sample and if interviews took place at other institutions I would have found more support for the theory. There is also the issue of me, as the young, Caucasian female. Maybe the participants (the majority of whom were African American) did not feel comfortable telling me of their struggles. Whatever the reason as to why more instances of stereotype threat failed to appear throughout the data, it was clear that Stereotype Threat Theory was not well supported within this particular sample.

Other limitations. The sample for this study was NCAA Division I - FBS student-athletes at one institution. A majority of the participants were from areas in the United States where football is the primary sport and is engrained in the culture of the state. Furthermore, because the interviews took place when the student-athletes were meeting with their learning specialist, there were time constraints regarding how long the interviews could last. The majority of the student-athletes interviewed were underclassman and had limited college experiences. Furthermore, the athletic academic advisors scheduled the interviews, and in essence, the advisors selected the student-athletes that could be interviewed for this study. The interviews also took place over a two-day period with eight of the nine interviews being conducted on the first day. Although I did take breaks between interviews, there is the possibility that researcher fatigue may have impacted the study (Clark, 2008). Lastly, I am a young Caucasian female researcher who interviewed male participants; the majority of the participants were minorities. Thus,

the lack of rapport and the limited time that I had to interact with the student-athletes could have impacted the study. The findings of this study should not be generalized; the goal of the study was not to generalize, but rather to learn about the experiences of the nine participants who were diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. It should also be noted that as an individual with a learning disability, compassion bias may have interfered with the interviews and analysis of the data to a limited degree.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, there are several positive steps that can be taken to better serve student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD as well as student-athletes who do not have disabilities.

Recommendations for athletic academic advisors. In my opinion, athletic academic advisors should ensure student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD should come to summer school upon graduating from high school. This will assist student-athletes with their initial transition from high school to college. Allowing the student-athlete to get adjusted to the college environment. Furthermore, arriving in the summer will allow the all student-athletes to be screened for a learning disability, and if necessary, be tested for a learning disability. Thus, if a student-athlete has a learning disability the testing process will be completed prior to the student-athlete starting the fall semester. This will allow the results of the testing to be completed and to be given to disability services to determine what, if any, accommodations are warranted prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Based on the results of this study how the learning disability test is administered can serve as a threat, as such, it is important that those administering the screeners and test using non-threatening language that does not invoke stereotype threat. I

feel it also important that every incoming student-athlete is screened for a learning disability, this will assist in identifying those students that maybe fell through the cracks in primary and secondary education, as well as re-validate previous diagnosis and provided updated information on those student-athletes who have been previously diagnosed.

Athletic departments need to strengthen their relationships with disability services on their respective campuses. Disability services personnel should be active in the athletic department, spreading awareness about what disability services is and the benefits of disability services. Furthermore, athletic personnel should encourage student-athletes to meet with disability services representatives. It is important that student-athletes understand what their disability is, what accommodations they are eligible for, and the long term benefits of using their accommodations.

Furthermore, those working with this population should have a background in special education. Not only do student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD need a controlled learning environment, but also this population needs to work with professionals who have been trained to deal with the specific needs of this population. I also recommend that student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD not only work with a learning specialist who had a special education background, but depending upon the needs of the individual also meet with a reading specialist as well as a math specialist.

Student-athletes should understand how they learn and the strategies to assist them in better understanding the academic material. Having every student-athlete take a computer-based learner profile test can provide student-athletes with a basic understanding about how they learn best. Furthermore, the results of the test can be given

to tutors, mentors, learning specialist, coaches, and even teachers. Sharing how the student-athlete learns will assist those working with the student-athletes to have a better understanding of activities and strategies that will help that student learn.

Student-athletes need to make more of an investment in school. The participants loved football, but did not appear to have the same enthusiasm for school. Student-athletes need to be motivated to like school, which will in turn equate to academic success. Most of the participants were competitive and like winning, perhaps turning school activities into a game would increase motivation. Perhaps motivation can be achieved by allowing student-athletes to select a class or two that they would be interested in taking. Furthermore, student-athletes need to reduce the reliance on tutors and become self-directed. Athletic academic advisors, learning specialist, tutors, and mentors should encourage student-athletes to come to tutoring with the material completed, and use tutoring as a time or refresh or better understand the material. Athletic personnel should set high expectations for student-athletes and increase their accountability in regards to completing schoolwork and studying. For some student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, directive study should be utilized, meaning that from the time student-athletes enter the academic support center to the time they exit, this populations of students (especially if they have a learning disability and/or ADHD) should be interacting one-on-one with a member of the athletic academic support staff (i.e. tutor, mentor, learning specialist, reading specialist, math specialist, academic adviser).

Recommendations for faculty. Many student-athletes feel that faculty members have negative perceptions about them. As such, faculty members need to make an additional effort to disprove the stereotype by attempting to understand that student-

athletes are different from their non-athlete peers. Many student-athletes have not learned how to interact with individuals within the field of academia, and believing that faculty do not like student-athlete's anyway, many may not attempt to build a relationship. Faculty should encourage student-athletes to meet with them and to develop a better line of communication with the student-athlete. Furthermore, faculty members need to realize that everyone has different learning styles; thus, before labeling student-athletes as dumb or lazy, the learning needs of the student-athlete should be taken into account.

Recommendations for coaches. The coach should be aware of the student-athletes' learning disability and/or ADHD diagnosis, and educate him or herself about learning disabilities and how learning disabilities and/or ADHD can impact student-athletes. Coaches need to look at each student-athlete individually, and realize that what is best for one student-athlete may not necessary be the best way to teach another student-athlete. The participants in this study looked up to their coaches as father figures, many grew up without a male role model, and the coach may need to fill that void in the student-athletes life. As such, coaches need to invest time in learning how each player learns to maximize his athletic and academic potential.

Recommendations for institutions of higher learning. Lastly, greater effort needs to be placed into spreading awareness about learning disabilities and/or ADHD. There are so many misconceptions and questions surrounding learning disabilities and/or ADHD. If individuals can gain a better understanding for learning disabilities and/or ADHD, then, hopefully, the stereotypes will be eliminated; thus, reducing the threat and stigma surrounding learning disabilities and/or ADHD. Higher education needs to do a better job of educating the campus community about learning disabilities, and the accommodations

that are available to those who qualify. Unless learning disabilities are better understood, and the fear of being "labeled" is reduced, students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD who need to take advantages of accommodations will continue not utilizing disability services.

Recommendations for the NCAA. Little is known about student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. The NCAA can assist in filling the gaps in the literature by monitoring this population and ensuring the needs of these students are met. Therefore, the organization needs to keep track of how many student-athletes are receiving initial eligibility waivers due to having a diagnosed learning disability and/or ADHD. The organization also needs to monitor how many student-athletes are being diagnosed upon entering higher education to see if student-athletes are being over-identified for eligibility purposes. Furthermore, the graduation rates of this sub-populations of student-athletes needs to be monitored to ensure that student-athletes with learning disabilities are actually graduating and not simply being diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD so they do not have to meet PTD requirements.

Most of the student-athletes in this study knew little about their disability, and in turn, did not take advantage of the accommodations that they were eligible for because of their disability. Therefore, what is the purpose of diagnosing student-athletes if they are not going to take advantage of resources that can greatly assist them throughout their collegiate career (Toriano et al., 2010)? Perhaps, the end goal, as was with the Florida State case, ia to just keep these student-athletes eligible by having them labeled with a disability to avoid continuing eligibility standards (NCAA, 2009a; NCAA, 2012a). Regardless of the motive, the NCAA can serve as a positive force to ensure the transparency and the overall

well being regarding the diagnosis and accommodations provided to student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD.

Future Research

Results from this study have shown that there are major gaps in the literature regarding student-athletes with learning disabilities and the experiences of student-athletes. In reality, few studies have been conducted on this specific population of student-athletes. It is critical that researchers continue to learn more about student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD to gain a deeper understanding of this population. Future researchers should examine female student-athletes as well as student-athletes from different sports with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. Future studies should not be limited to just one institution, but multiple institutions in several NCAA divisions. Not only should future studies involve learning more about the experience of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, but literature is needed regarding the transitional process of this population (initial transition as well as transition into sport retirement), as well as a greater understanding of how and why this sub-group of student-athletes is motivated. Furthermore, the field would benefit from longitudinal studies involving the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD.

Results from this study clearly showed that this population learns differently. Therefore, future studies should focus on how student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD learn. Future studies should examine the learning styles of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. Research into the positions that student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD tend to play is also warranted. Lastly, studies that have a sample of both student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD as well as

student-athletes without disabilities should be conducted. Although there is limited research on student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, it is difficult to determine if they experience of a student-athlete without a disability would be similar.

One finding that unexpectedly came out of this study was the notion of "manhood." The participants appeared to make the connection between manhood and playing football. Several studies have operationalized manhood in different ways (McDougle & Capers, 2012; Mitchell & Stewart; 2012). The ways the participants described manhood is not necessary what should be, and in fact, the connection that playing football equates to being a man is not necessarily in line with the literature (McDougle & Capers, 2012; Mitchell & Stewart; 2012). As such, future research should examine how football student-athletes view manhood.

Research should not only involve student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, but also learning more about the personnel that are interacting with this population. Learning specialists and athletic academic councilors should be interviewed to better understand the support that is being provided to student-athletes. Those coaching this specific population of student-athletes should be studied to better understand how coaches perceive learning disabilities and adjust to coaching student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD.

Conclusion

This study provides a small glimpse into the experience of nine student-athletes at one institution who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD. The possibilities for future research as open and exciting. Furthermore, there are a wide variety of social as well as learning theories that can be applied to this population.

Student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD are a unique and understudied population. The goal of this study was to provide a greater understanding of the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, in hopes that programs can be developed and awareness can be spread to reducing stereotype threat, ultimately increasing the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. This study revealed several situations in which student-athletes experienced stereotype threat. Thus, it is important to realize when the threat is occurring in an attempt to disprove the stereotype (Steele, 1997). Furthermore, the participants were self-empowered to learn, wanted to learn and felt that they had the capability to learn. In this situation, the participants are trying to disprove the stereotype not only about student-athletes, but also in regards to individuals with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. These participants want to learn, and, ultimately, should not be detoured by stereotypes, but should instead be afforded every opportunity to succeed.

Final Thoughts

The last year of my life that I have spent working on this paper has truly changed my prospective. I was taught to think critically about intercollegiate athletics and its value within higher education. Intercollegiate sport was built upon the idea of capital gain and commercialism and it is argued that the intention of college sport was never for recreation or character building purposes (Smith, 1988; Yost, 2010). However, for these participants, football provided them with so much. Above all else, football provided the participants with opportunity: the opportunity to earn a college degree, the opportunity to become better men, and ultimately, the opportunity to become better members of society. I feel that we are quick to judge student-athletes and to question their intentions while enrolled in

institutions of higher learning. However, the participants, although they loved to play football, were also on campus to learn. As such, those in higher education should ensure that these student-athletes have every opportunity to do just that, to learn. We also need to realize that so much of the college experience takes place outside of the four walls of a classroom. For these students, much of there experience took place on a turf field. Therefore, please, stop trying to compare student-athletes to their non-athlete peers. They are not like those who do not participant in a varsity sport, and as such, will not have the same experiences. Stop pushing student-athletes to conform to the expectations of higher education, and instead praise and value student-athletes for their differences.

More is also needed to regards to learning disability and/or ADHD advocacy and awareness. Such a movement must start from the top. University administrators and disability service staff members need to assist in the efforts to spread awareness. This can start small, with faculty workshops and teaching faculty members how to effectively teach this special population of students. Students should not feel "labeled" because of a learning disability, but inspired. I feel that colleges and universities are a place of free-thinking, and a place where social change can begin. Let this change begin now, and allow the negative thoughts and perceptions regarding learning disabilities and/or ADHD to change with educational programs and awareness.

Lastly, this experience has taught me that I have an obligation to help those who are less fortunate than I, as well as those who, like me, have a learning disability and don't understand why they must work so hard to complete what should be a simple task. I know now that I can make a difference and that change is needed. I hope this dissertation will serve as my first attempt to do just that, to inspire change.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Institution Review Board Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
1534 White Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865-974-7697
FAX: 865-974-7400

December 7, 2012

IRB#: 9034 B

TITLE: The experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD

Stokowski, Sarah E.
Kinesiology, Recreation & Sport Studies
135 E HPER Building
Campus-2700

Hardin, Robin
Kinesiology, Recreation & Sport Studies
335 HPER Building
Campus-2700

Your project listed above has been reviewed and granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

Brenda Lawson
Compliances

Enclosure

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD"

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine your experiences as a NCAA Division I FBS football student-athlete who has been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD upon entering higher education.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

For this study you will be asked a list of questions focused on your experience as a football student-athlete with a learning disability and ADHD. Interviews will take place face-to-face or over the phone, and last approximately one hour. You may be asked to participate in one possible follow-up interview clarify any questions the researcher may have after transcribing the interviews. These follow-up interviews will occur over the phone, should take no longer than one hour. You will be participating in one face-to-face interview or telephone interview. The interview will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in documenting your responses.

RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The potential risk to you is minimal. Complete anonymity might not be possible, but every available precaution will be taken to protect your identity. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym (false name) that will be substituted for your name during data analysis. The name of your institution, as well as any other possible factors that can be used to identify you (e.g. hometown) will also be changed to ensure that every precaution is taken to assist in maintaining complete confidentiality. Digital recordings of the interviews will be stored in a secure location and erased when all interviews are transcribed.

BENEFITS

This study will provide you with the opportunity reflect upon your experience. There has never been a study conducted that looks at the experiences of student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD, and, therefore, results from this study will be adding valuable knowledge that may help to improve services to student-athletes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. You will choose a pseudonym rather than using your real name. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. All digital recordings of your interviews will be erased upon transcription.

Initials

EXPEDITED REV.

DEC 07 2012

UTK IRB

FWA 6629

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT
The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse subjects for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify Sarah Stokowski at (865) 974-1272.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects such as psychological effects from discussing your experience as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researcher, Sarah Stokowski, at 1914 Andy Holt Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37916, and (865) 974-1272. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

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APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board From B

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. Principal Investigator:
Sarah E Stokowski
[redacted]

Faculty Advisor:
Robin Hardin
[redacted]

Department:
Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies

2. **Project Classification:**
   Dissertation

3. **Title of Project:**
   The experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD

4. **Starting Date:**
   Upon IRB approval

5. **Estimated Completion Date:**
   August 30, 2013

6. **External Funding** *(if any):* N/A

   - **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**
   - **Funding Agency:**
   - **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:**
   - **UT Proposal Number *(if known):***

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) upon entering higher education.

Research questions.

Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. How does being a student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD shape the academic experience?
2. How does being a student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD shape the athletic experience?
3. How do football student-athletes with a learning disability and/or ADHD perceive how they are stereotyped?

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The principal investigator will invite NCAA FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD upon entering higher education to participate in this study. A total of eight to 12 participants will be interviewed. Purposeful sampling will be used to attract possible participants. Upon IRB approval, an e-mail will be sent to the athletic academic advisors at NCAA Division I institutions explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix A). Athletic academic advisors will then forward on the e-mail to those student-athletes who meet the criteria (Appendix B). Those interested in participating will directly contact the primary investigator via e-mail or phone. An interview date and time will be established. Athletic administrators will be asked to sign a confidential statement prior to any interviews being conducted to ensure that the identities of those participating are participating remain confidential (see Appendix E).

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Informed consent will be obtained from the participants (Appendix G) by e-mailing them the informed consent statement as an attachment with them reading it, signing it, and utilizing USPS to mail the informed consent statement back to the researcher if they agree to participate in the study. The participant may also scan the signed informed consent statement as a PDF and send it to the primary researcher via e-mail. The informed consent statement can also be faxed to the researcher at (865)974-7154, this is the fax number for the department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies office at the University of Tennessee.

Interviews will be the single source of data collection for this study.

Upon agreeing to participate, the participant and researcher will schedule a mutually agreed upon time for the phone interview or face-to-face interview to take place. When possible, interviews will take place in person, in a private setting where participants can speak freely about their experiences. If circumstances prevent a participant from taking part in an in-person interview, the researchers will interview the participant via telephone from a location that will allow for privacy. Telephone interviews will take place in a private office at the University of Tennessee, utilizing a secure phone line within the department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies at the University of Tennessee.

Semi-structured interviews will take place and a total of eight to 12 interviews will be sought. Interviews will seek to explore the experiences of student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD as related to their academic and athletic performance, as well as how a student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD perceives stereotypes. A list of questions will be asked but interviews will be conducted in a conversational format to allow potential follow-up questions, to allow the participant to speak freely, and to provide for open coding during data analysis (see Appendix D).

Interviews will last approximately one hour. Each participant will be interviewed once with one possible follow-up interview per participant to clarify any questions the researcher may have after transcribing the interviews. These follow-up interviews should take no longer than one hour. To ensure accuracy, Interviews will be recorded by a digital

recording device. Once an interview is transcribed, the digital recording of the interview will be erased permanently from the digital recording device to protect the identity of the participant. All interview transcripts will be kept on a hard drive (password protected) and on a USB flash drive that will be stored in the locked office of the faculty advisor at the University of Tennessee which is HPER Room 335.

To assist in the transcribing of the interviews, the principal investigator may hire a qualified transcriptionist. The transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to being given the transcripts. The transcriber will also be asked to destroy the data upon the completion of transcription to ensure the protection of the participants (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts will be read, examined, and coded according to themes that may emerge from the research question topics and open coding from the semi-structured interviews. Themes will be color-coded. Notes will be taken in the margins of the document. Data analysis will occur multiple times during the study, specifically, after each interview. Data analysis of the entire transcribed interviews will be conducted again once interviews are complete in order to ensure consistency in theme identification. When interviews are coded, the data pieces identified in coding and notes will be grouped by theme in a separate document. During each data analysis and coding, the previous data will be reviewed to confirm themes that were identified and ensure the new data identifies with the previously coded data. Coded data will be grouped according to theme. The document will serve as the database for themes that emerge from the data.

To ensure the validity of the analysis, a research group will be utilized and only have access to the de-identified transcripts. The research group consists of doctoral students as well as faculty members who are experienced qualitative researchers. Each member of the research group will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to reviewing the interview transcripts (Appendix D).

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The potential risk to the subjects is minimal. Complete anonymity might not be possible, but every available precaution will be taken to protect the identities of the student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD that are interviewed. Each participant will be asked to provide a pseudonym that will be substituted for his name during data analysis. The name of the student-athlete's institutions as well as any other characteristics that can lead to identification (e.g. hometown) will also be changed to ensure the confidentiality of the participant. Digital recordings of the interviews will be stored in a secure location until all interviews are transcribed. The digital recordings of the interviews will be erased after transcription. Being asked questions about the participants experience as a student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD may put the participant in a position to acknowledge what they may consider a negative aspect of their life, resulting in the uncovering of specific thoughts or feelings that may be unwanted. The participants will be informed of their ability to exit the study at any point with no penalty. The researcher will refer the participant to that student-athletes on-campus counseling center. Contact

information will be obtained once the participating institutions of the participants are confirmed.

VI. BENEFITS

This study will provide FBS football student-athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD the ability to reflect upon their experiences. There has never been a study conducted that looks at the experiences of this sub-population of student-athletes, and, as such, the results of the study will be adding to the body of knowledge regarding this topic as well as the literature.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

Each participant will be e-mailed the informed consent statement prior to the interview; thus, allowing each participant to review the document. Before the interview begins, the researchers will explain the study and procedures to each participant. Then, before the interview begins, the participants in this study will be asked to read the informed consent statement. The participant will be asked to sign the statement if he agrees to participate and return it to the investigator. The participant will also be told that he may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. A copy of the consent statement will be provided to the participant for his own records. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for three years thereafter in a locked file in the [redacted].

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The principal investigator, Sarah Stokowski, is a third-year doctoral student at the University of Tennessee and has participated in and led multiple research studies over the last two years. She has conducted interviews in previous studies that require her to protect the confidentiality of participants. She has also had several scholarly presentations with interviews as the primary source of data collection and has one publication with interviews as the source of data collection. Furthermore, both the principal researcher as well as the faculty advisor completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), which provides research ethics education to all members of the research community (see Appendix H). Dr. Hardin has more than 30 published refereed journal articles and one of his areas of expertise is intercollegiate athletics. He has several articles published in this area as well as publications using interviewing as a method of data collection.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

In-person interviews will take place in a private setting where the participants can speak freely about their experiences. Telephone interviews will also take place from a location that allows for privacy. The researchers will record each interview with a digital recording device. They will download and transcribe the interviews into documents on a computer. After the interviews are downloaded, they will be transferred to a flash drive for storage, and deleted from the digital recording device.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.

2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.

3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.

4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES
Principal Investigator: _____Sarah E Stokowski_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____Dr. Robin Hardin_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL
The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) : _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

APPENDIX A

E-Mail to Athletic Academic Advisors Seeking Participants

Dear Athletic Academic Advisor,

I hope you are doing well. For my dissertation, I am exploring the experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD. I am seeking football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD upon entering post-secondary education to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD upon entering higher education.

In order to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the student-athletes at your institutions, can you forward on the message (see below) to any student-athletes who meet the criteria for this study? Student-athletes who are interested in participating can contact me directly.

My ultimate goal in doing this study is to gain a better understanding of this population in hopes of improving the services that are provided to them.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns that you may have.

Thank you for your assistance in this process.

Sarah Stokowski
Doctoral Candidate
Sport Management
University of Tennessee
[redacted]

APPENDIX B

E-Mail to FBS Football Student-Athletes with learning disabilities and/or ADHD

Dear Student-Athlete,

My name is Sarah Stokowski, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee. You are invited to participate in a research study. As an individual with a learning disability and ADHD, I am interested in learning about your experience as a student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD.

For this study you will be asked to answer a series of questions related to your experience. Interviews will take place over the face-to-face or over the phone, and last approximately one hour. You may be asked to participate in one possible follow-up interview clarify any questions the researcher may have after transcribing the interviews. These follow-up interviews should take no longer than one hour. To ensure your confidentiality and comfort, the interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon environment in which you can feel to speak freely. Your name, institution, as well as your responses to the questions will be confidential. Furthermore, you may choose to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

By participating in this study, you will help athletic personnel gain a better understanding of your experience in hopes to developing programs and services that will better fit your needs.

If you are interesting in participating in this study or have any questions, please contact me, Sarah Stokowski, via e-mail [redacted] or phone [redacted].

I look forward to hearing from you.
Sarah Stokowski
Doctoral Candidate
Sport Management
University of Tennessee
[redacted]

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of NCAA Division I FBS football student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD upon entering higher education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. How do football student-athletes with a learning disabilities and/or ADHD navigate the demands of higher education?
2. In what situations do football student-athlete with a learning disability and/or ADHD experience instances of stereotype threat?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
2. What year are you in school?
3. What race/ethnicity do you identify yourself as?
4. What is your major?
5. Where are you from?
6. Can you describe your family structure?
7. Is this the first and only college you have attended?
8. What position do you play?
9. Do you start?
10. Can you tell me about your typical day?

11. What do you like about school?
12. Can you describe to me some of the challenges that you have in school?
13. How did you pick your major?

14. When did you begin playing football and who encouraged you to play sports?
15. How does athletics influence your life?
16. What do you like about playing football?
17. What are some challenges that arise from playing football?

18. How would you describe yourself?
19. How do your friends perceive you?
20. How do your teachers perceive you?
21. How do you feel your coaches perceive you?
22. When you first got to school, were you tested for a LD and/or ADHD? Can you

describe the process?

23. What's is your diagnosis?
24. What do you know about your learning disability and/or ADHD?
25. Who have you told about your learning disability and/or ADHD and why did you confide in them?
26. Does your institution have an academic program specifically for student-athletes who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities? Can you describe the program and your involvement in the program?
27. How does having a learning disability and or/ADHD make you feel about yourself?
28. How do you feel your peers view you as an individual with a learning disability and/or ADHD?
29. Do you use any of the accommodations that are available to you?
30. Has learning been difficult for you, and what strategies did you use to make it easier for you to learn?
31. How do you feel people perceive you as an individual with a learning disability and/or ADHD?
32. Can you tell me about a time in which you were stereotyped?
33. How did that make you feel?

34. Is there anything else you think we missed talking about relating to your learning disability or stereotypes?

APPENDIX D

Research Team Member's Pledge of Confidentiality

As a member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading transcriptions of confidential interviews. The information in these transcripts has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcriptions with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, his/her doctoral chair, or other members of this research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Research Team Member	Date
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX E

Athletic Administrator's Pledge of Confidentiality

I understand that in assisting to organize the participants for this study, I have access to confidential information. The information revealed in this study by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information regarding this study with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, his/her doctoral chair, or other members of this research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Athletic Administrator	Date
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX F

Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

As a transcribing typist of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the primary researcher of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

_____ _____

Transcribing Typist Date

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD"

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine your experiences as a NCAA Division I FBS football student-athlete who has been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or ADHD upon entering higher education.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

For this study you will be asked a list of questions focused on your experience as a football student-athlete with a learning disability and ADHD. Interviews will take place face-to-face or over the phone, and last approximately one hour. You may be asked to participate in one possible follow-up interview clarify any questions the researcher may have after transcribing the interviews. These follow-up interviews will occur over the phone, should take no longer than one hour. You will be participating in one face-to-face interview or telephone interview. The interview will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in documenting your responses.

RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The potential risk to you is minimal. Complete anonymity might not be possible, but every available precaution will be taken to protect your identity. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym (false name) that will be substituted for your name during data analysis. The name of your institution, as well as any other possible factors that can be used to identify you (e.g. hometown) will also be changed to ensure that every precaution is taken to assist in maintaining complete confidentiality. Digital recordings of the interviews will be stored in a secure location and erased when all interviews are transcribed.

BENEFITS

This study will provide you with the opportunity reflect upon your experience. There has never been a study conducted that looks at the experiences of student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and/or ADHD, and, therefore, results from this study will be adding valuable knowledge that may help to improve services to student-athletes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. You will choose a pseudonym rather than using your real name. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. All digital recordings of your interviews will be erased upon transcription.

_____ Initials

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT
The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse subjects for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify Sarah Stokowski at (865) 974-1272.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects such as psychological effects from discussing your experience as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researcher, Sarah Stokowski, at 1914 Andy Holt Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37916, and (865) 974-1272. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX H

CITI CERTIFICATION

SARAH STOKOWSKI

Group 4 Fellows, Residents and Students:

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 09/26/10 (Ref # 4999079)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Introduction	09/26/10	no quiz
History and Ethical Principles	09/26/10	6/7 (86%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	09/26/10	5/5 (100%)
Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process	09/26/10	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent	09/26/10	4/4 (100%)
Records-Based Research	09/26/10	2/2 (100%)
Research With Protected Populations - Vulnerable Subjects: An Overview	09/26/10	4/4 (100%)
Workers as Research Subjects-A Vulnerable Population	09/26/10	4/4 (100%)
Hot Topics	09/26/10	no quiz
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	09/26/10	2/2 (100%)
University of Tennessee Health Science Center Module - Knoxville	09/26/10	no quiz
University of Tennessee Health Science Center - Knoxville	09/26/10	3/3 (100%)
Elective Modules	**Date Completed**	**Score**
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	09/26/10	3/4 (75%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	09/26/10	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	09/26/10	2/5 (40%)

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

ROBIN HARDIN

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher: Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 10/26/12 (Ref # 9059113)

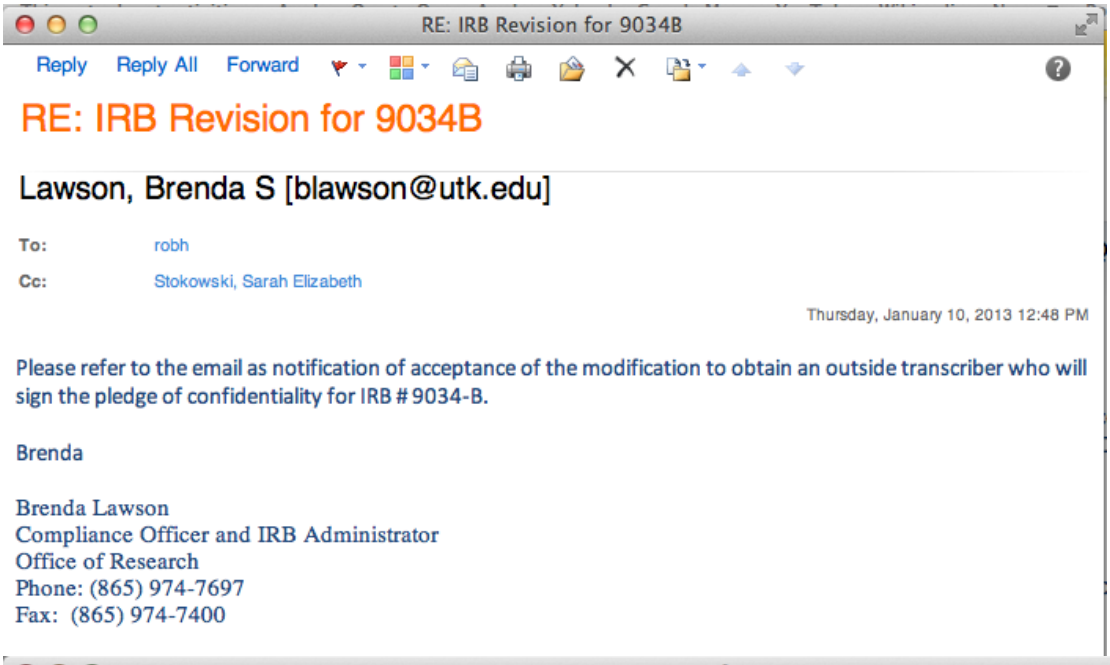
Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Inst. Page	10/26/12	no quiz
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction	10/26/12	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research	10/26/12	10/10 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Research With Protected Populations - Vulnerable Subjects: An Overview	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBR	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Prisoners	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Research with Children - SBR	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Children	10/26/12	3/3 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	10/26/12	4/4 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Pregnant Women, Human Fetuses, and Neonates	10/26/12	3/3 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research	10/26/12	3/3 (100%)
Cultural Competence in Research	10/26/12	5/5 (100%)
Elective Modules	**Date Completed**	**Score**
Avoiding Group Harms: U.S. Research Perspectives	10/26/12	1/3 (33%)

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board (IRB) From B Revision Approval



RE: IRB Revision for 9034B

Reply Reply All Forward

RE: IRB Revision for 9034B

Lawson, Brenda S [blawson@utk.edu]

To: robh

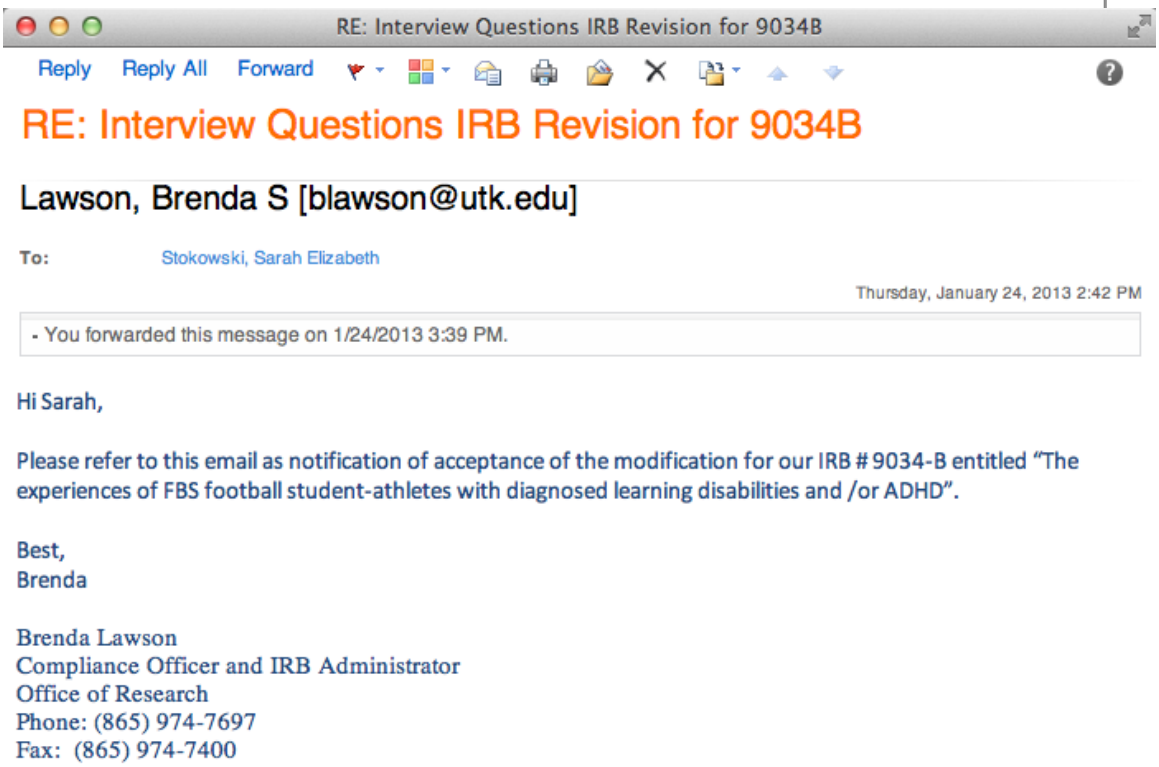
Cc: Stokowski, Sarah Elizabeth

Thursday, January 10, 2013 12:48 PM

Please refer to the email as notification of acceptance of the modification to obtain an outside transcriber who will sign the pledge of confidentiality for IRB # 9034-B.

Brenda

Brenda Lawson
Compliance Officer and IRB Administrator
Office of Research
Phone: (865) 974-7697
Fax: (865) 974-7400



RE: Interview Questions IRB Revision for 9034B

Reply Reply All Forward

RE: Interview Questions IRB Revision for 9034B

Lawson, Brenda S [blawson@utk.edu]

To: Stokowski, Sarah Elizabeth

Thursday, January 24, 2013 2:42 PM

- You forwarded this message on 1/24/2013 3:39 PM.

Hi Sarah,

Please refer to this email as notification of acceptance of the modification for our IRB # 9034-B entitled "The experiences of FBS football student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and /or ADHD".

Best,
Brenda

Brenda Lawson
Compliance Officer and IRB Administrator
Office of Research
Phone: (865) 974-7697
Fax: (865) 974-7400

VITA

A native of Aurora, Illinois, Sarah Elizabeth Stokowski holds a Master of Education from the University of Oklahoma in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration, and an undergraduate degree in Sport Science from the University of Kansas. In May 2013, Sarah will graduate from the University of Tennessee with a Ph.D. in Kinesiology and Sport Studies with a specialization in Sport Management. While at Tennessee, Sarah had several responsibilities including assisting faculty with research projects as well as conducting her own research, and teaching various undergraduate Sport Management courses including Intercollegiate Athletics as well as Sport Marketing. In addition to her teaching and research obligations, Sarah served as a two term member of the Tennessee Sport Management: Partners in Sports board and has previously served on the Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (TAHPERD) board.

Sarah's passion for athletic student-life and athletic academic reform has sparked her interest in assisting student-athletes in becoming successful on and off the field. Recently, Sarah published an article on the motivational factors of international student-athletes and has more than 16 location, regional, and national conference presentations. Sarah strives to assist those with learning disabilities achieve academic success and societal acceptance, and her humanist views greatly influence her research agenda. As such, Sarah's research interests lie in examining the transitions, motivations, and experiences of student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities and ADHD.

Sarah's past practical experience includes working as a graduate assistant in athletic student-life at the University of Oklahoma. During her time at Oklahoma, Sarah worked with Football Offense, Women's Gymnastics, and Women's Tennis teams, insuring that Sooner student-athletes met continuing eligibility standards. Prior to working at Oklahoma, Sarah was an intern in the athletic department at the University of Missouri where she worked in the Tiger Scholarship Fund, assisting in fundraising efforts to support more than 500 Mizzou student-athletes. During her time at Mizzou, Sarah also worked in the Total Person Program with Baseball, Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving, and Women's Tennis. In the summer of 2007, Sarah served as an intern in the Football Office at Stanford University assisting with recruiting efforts.

Currently, Sarah resides in Knoxville, Tennessee with her two little dogs, Sweeney and Scout. In the fall, Sarah will transition to Eastern Illinois University where she will be an Assistant Professor in Sport Management.